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ABSTRACT

These hearing transcripts present testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture regarding the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Statements were made by several senators, the president of the American School Food Service Association (Connecticut); a school food service program director (Florida); the director of nutrition and education for the American School Food Service Association (Virginia); the director of the Children's Nutrition Research Center (Texas); the vice president of Food Operations at Disneyland Resort and Concept Development (California); and an assistant professor of clinical dietetics and nutrition, University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania). Witnesses maintained that the Nutrition Education and Training Program needs funding to maintain its current service level. It is necessary to modify the School Lunch Program to encourage student participation, make it easier for schools for qualify, and to reduce the administrative burden. Testimony also indicated that breakfast programs are vital to student nutrition, academic performance, and school attendance. School food service has become more efficient and more consumer-oriented, has expanded to supply meals to new audiences, and has increased the flexibility of service delivery. However, it is necessary to integrate food service within the educational day to enhance student nutrition knowledge and practice. Offering food choices may reduce food waste. The solution to major childhood nutritional problems is to apply current information to improve children's diets and to support nutrition research. An appendix to the transcripts contains additional statements, letters, and materials submitted. (KB)

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SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS

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ED 420 404

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS

MARCH 4, 1997

Printed for the use of the
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(II)

CONTENTS

	Page
Statements:	
Hon. Richard G. Lugar, a U.S. Senator from Indiana	1
Hon. Tom Harkin, a U.S. Senator from Iowa	2
Hon. Thad Cochran, a U.S. Senator from Mississippi, prepared statement	4
Hon. Kent Conrad, a U.S. Senator from North Dakota	4
Hon. J. Robert Kerrey, a U.S. Senator from Nebraska	5
Hon. Mitch McConnell, a U.S. Senator from Kentucky, prepared statement	6
Hon. Pat Roberts, a U.S. Senator from Kansas, prepared statement	6
Hon. Patrick J. Leahy, a U.S. Senator from Vermont, prepared statement	13
Hon. Mary Landrieu, a U.S. Senator from Louisiana	17
Janet Bantly, president, American School Food Service Association, Enfield, CT	7
Mary Kate Harrison, director, Food Service, Hillsborough County School District, Tampa, FL	9
Tami J. Cline, director, Nutrition and Education, American School Food Service Association, Alexandria, VA	11
Dennis Bier, medical doctor, director, Children's Nutrition Research Center, Houston, TX	20
Michael Berry, medical doctor, vice president, Food Operations and Concept Development, Disneyland Resort, Anaheim, CA	21
Judith L. Dodd, adjunct assistant professor, Clinical Dietetics/Nutrition, University of Pittsburgh, Allison Park, PA	24
APPENDIX	
Prepared Statements:	
Tami J. Cline	33
Dr. Dennis Bier	34
Dr. Michael Berry	38
Mary Kate Harrison	40
Judith L. Dodd	41
American School Food Service Association	43
Additional material submitted for the record:	
Senators' questions submitted to the witnesses and responses thereto:	
Children's Nutrition Research Center (general questions)	45
Questions specifically presented to Dr. Dennis Bier	48
Judith L. Dodd (general questions)	50
Questions specifically presented to Judith L. Dodd	52
Letter:	
To Senator Richard Lugar, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, from Janelle K. Mullen, principal, Omaha Public Schools, Norris Middle School, Omaha, NE	54

SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS

TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 1997

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD–G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Richard G. Lugar, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present or submitting a statement: Senators Lugar, McConnell, Roberts, Harkin, Leahy, Cochran, Conrad, Kerrey, and Landrieu.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, A U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

The CHAIRMAN. This meeting of the Senate Committee on Agriculture will come to order.

We turn this morning to nutrition, one of the most important responsibilities of our committee. We understand more each day as Americans about the importance of a nutritious diet as a part of a healthy lifestyle. Nutrition assistance programs also represent the vast majority of dollar spending of authorizations over which this committee has jurisdiction.

We will discuss today one of the most important Federal nutrition initiatives, the School Lunch Program. This program, and the School Breakfast Program, have been critically important in helping to meet the nutritional needs of children for more than half a century. Practically all of our public schools and one-fifth of private schools in America participate in the School Lunch Program. It is one of the most direct links between the Federal Government and a large segment of the American people.

Today's hearing is being held during the annual meeting of the American School Food Service Association. Many of its members are in the audience today, and that is obvious as I look out from the Chair. We are delighted that that is so. We will hear from three witnesses from the group. I commend the members of ASFSA for their hard work and their dedication to feeding our children.

As we applaud the efforts of our food service employees, it is also important for this committee to examine their work for the future. Our job is to make certain that Federal Government policies meet the needs of the Nation's children, including the nutritional goals our school cafeterias strive every day to achieve.

Though we cannot see into the future, we know two things for certain. First, we must continue to provide healthy, nutritious

meals. Second, budget pressures on school food authorities will probably continue. Therefore, all of us need to think innovatively.

More than 2 years ago, I raised 53 questions about our Farm Programs. I am now circulating a similar set of questions dealing with agricultural research, with which our committee will deal this year. In the same vein, it is appropriate to have an honest appraisal of the School Lunch Program. Some of my questions might be termed big-picture questions. For example, are Federal funds generally being spent efficiently? Are our nutritional goals the right ones? Are we meeting the food needs of both poor and nonpoor children? Can we make better use of the private sector?

At the same time, the nature of the nutrition issue also leads to some very specific questions. What administrative burdens and costs face school lunch providers? And, indeed, is the Government too involved in the intricacies of the School Lunch Program? Why do children not participate in the Program, and what sorts of challenges are posed by the limited time children have to eat lunch? Where is technology taking us? All of these questions deserve our attention.

In addition to ASFSA, we have other witnesses here today who are well involved in nutrition and food service, and I expect they will be able to add to the innovative thinking that this important subject deserves. It is my hope this hearing is a first step in a public discourse that will allow Congress to say with confidence that we are helping to meet our children's nutritional needs as the new century unfolds.

I wish to welcome the Indiana delegation that is here this morning. Will they raise their hands? They are indeed here and I appreciate that.

At this point, it is a point of personal privilege, as always, to turn to my Colleague, Senator Tom Harkin, of Iowa, the Distinguished Ranking Member of our committee, for his opening comments.

STATEMENT OF HON. TOM HARKIN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM IOWA

Senator HARKIN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I apologize for being a little late. It is wonderful to see such a great group of people here and a crowd here today for this very important hearing.

Our committee has had a proud tradition of bipartisan commitment to sound nutrition for our Nation's children. I want to thank and commend the Chairman for his personal efforts in this area, especially in the past Congress, and I also want to publicly thank Senator Leahy for his dedication to child nutrition.

In 1994, as this committee was considering child nutrition legislation, we were honored to hear testimony from the late Dr. Carl Sagan, who had done so much to bring the wonders of science into the consciousness of Americans. As a champion of education and learning, Dr. Sagan brought a "down-to-earth" message: *Without good nutrition, kids simply cannot grow and learn properly.* So, we know the evidence is overwhelming that good nutrition is critically important to physical and intellectual development.

I just want to say that all of the people who work in school food service across our land deserve a standing ovation for the great job they do every school day, and since the Chairman called on Indiana, I want to call on the Iowa delegation. Where is the Iowa delegation? I know they are here, too. I saw them earlier over in the basement of the Capitol.

Let me just say, that these local school food service operations and the kids they serve would have suffered under recent block grant proposals. Turning back those proposals was a major victory, but not one that should foster complacency. School nutrition programs face major challenges which demand substantial innovation and adaptation to meet the changing needs of our Nation's children.

One of my chief concerns is the School Breakfast Program. For a number of reasons, a very high percentage of children leave home every morning without breakfast, and consequently ill-prepared for the classroom. It should not be that way. We can do little or nothing to change that, but we can help those kids get a breakfast before they go to class and we can do more than we do now.

School lunch is served to *26-million-kids-each-day*, but only about 6.5 million are served school breakfast. Nationally, less than 40 percent of the low-income children who receive school lunch also receive school breakfast. In Iowa, it is less than 30 percent.

There are numerous other issues and challenges, but I do want to focus just a bit on the School Breakfast Program. In the recent welfare reform bill, the Program that allows for expansion of the School Breakfast Program was terminated. I offered an amendment on the Floor to continue that program, but it was unsuccessful, and one of the reasons for its not winning was the fact that it was going to cost more money in the future, which again pointed to that it was going to be successful because, as you expand the Program, kids take advantage of it.

I might say one other thing for the record, Mr. Chairman. I have done this test a number of times in Iowa, and I have done my work days in the school food line with the School Lunch Program and it is true that kids waste a lot of food at lunch. You go to the end of the line and you go to the waste cans and, boy, there is a lot of food thrown away. I mean, it just pains me to see that happen.

On the other hand, you go to a school breakfast program; and you stand by those garbage pails; and you don't see one speck of food thrown away. These kids are hungry when they come to school in the morning. They may not be all that hungry at lunch, but they are certainly hungry in the morning. They eat that food . . . that is what gets them started. I just challenge you to take that test some time; just stand at the end of that breakfast line and see how much food is thrown away in the morning. You will find none of it is thrown away. So, anyway, that is why I am so interested in the School Breakfast Program and expanding it.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, we have got to examine ways to make school meals more appealing, increase participation, and reduce the waste even as they are made more healthful and nutritious. It is not an easy task, but I know the American School Food Service Association is up to the task and I know that you have been looking at this for a long time.

There are indeed many challenges, but I think we can all say with one voice, as I say, in a bipartisan fashion, that the School Food Service Program nationwide is the envy of the world and we have to just continue to work hard to improve it, to make the needed changes, and hopefully expand the School Breakfast Program.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and other Members of the committee and with all of you out there to meet those challenges and to make our school breakfasts and our school lunches even better for our kids in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Harkin.

[The prepared statement of Senator Thad Cochran follows:]

STATEMENT OF SENATOR THAD COCHRAN

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing to review the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. In my State of Mississippi one out of every six students participates in these programs. The benefits that are derived are very important to their health and learning.

When this committee passed the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994, it reauthorized the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI). Congress originally authorized the creation of NFSMI 7 years ago to assist with the training, and research needs of school food service throughout the United States; and the institute continually fulfills its mission, by providing excellent training opportunities for child nutrition personnel across the Nation. The intent of the development and operations of the institute is to assist each level of child nutrition through education, and research, wherever and whenever possible. In fact, the institute's research and training manuals are available to all school districts in all 50 States.

I want to commend the NFSMI for the good work they are doing with a target audience of 93,000-plus school districts. Among the services this institute is now operating is a "Help Desk" for direct service for school food service personnel; via a toll free 800 number, along with a national clearinghouse that has a direct connection to the National Agriculture Library, via a toll free telephone number.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I hope it will serve as an opportunity for the witnesses to offer their assessment of the services the NFSMI offers.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair would like to recognize other Senators who have joined us. Senator Conrad, do you have a comment this morning?

STATEMENT OF HON. KENT CONRAD, A U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA

Senator CONRAD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do. I would like to recognize the North Dakota delegation, but not by raising of hands. We have got a small enough delegation that I can name them. We have got Penny Nielsen and Dixie Schultz with us. Welcome! It is good to have North Dakotans here as well.

First of all, in North Dakota, Mr. Chairman, we have 87,000 children that benefit from the School Lunch Program and 11,000 that are in the Breakfast Program. I have been to many school lunches, and have been to many breakfasts. I can confirm that which Senator Harkin has reported. Those meals make a difference in the lives of these children.

Not only have I seen it with my own eyes, but it has been reported to me by the teachers that a school breakfast program makes a dramatic difference. It is very hard for a child to attend a class if they are hungry, and the fact is, according to teachers

who have reported to me in North Dakota, many children were coming to school hungry and with the School Breakfast Program, that need is addressed; and I tell you, it is great to see them getting pancakes and sausage . . . and I must say that I especially remember the "pancakes and sausage breakfast."

School Lunch is critically important. You know, we have had perhaps the most vicious winter in our history in North Dakota. We have had 8 major blizzards so far and it has been impossible in some of these days for children to get home. They would get to school, the blizzard would hit, and without a feeding program those kids would have had a very rough day. So, these programs make a difference in people's lives and we can be grateful for that.

Let me just end with this note, if I could, Mr. Chairman. I remember very well last year, there were some who were insisting we block-grant these programs and take away any Federal assurance of what a nutritional standard ought to be for children. That was a very real threat. It passed in the House and it came to this chamber, and I just want to commend this Chairman and our former Ranking Member, Senator Leahy, and our current Ranking Member, Senator Harkin, because they stood up and they were counted.

[Applause.]

Senator CONRAD. With the virtually unanimous support of this committee, these programs were maintained, and I really thought last year that was one of the proudest moments for this committee and this Senate, and the Chairman is to be recognized and commended, along with Senator Leahy and Senator Harkin, for standing firm at a time when it wasn't so certain what the outcome was going to be. So, I just wanted to say that note as we begin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Kerrey, of Nebraska.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT J. KERREY, A U.S. SENATOR FROM NEBRASKA

Senator KERREY. Well, I don't want to break this trend of praise for the Chairman and Ranking Member. I particularly applaud you, Senator Harkin, for shaving your face.

I want to recognize the three people from Nebraska, as well, that are here—Mary Anderson, Phyllis Erickson, and Edith Zumwalt—and echo the comments that have been made about preventing this program from becoming a block grant program last year.

I would underscore, however, that one of the reasons that there was enthusiasm for block grants was the administrative costs of running these programs at the State and local level. I hope that this committee will be responsive to some of the concerns that are there with dietary guidelines. It makes great sense to have dietary guidelines, but the administrative burden, particularly for some smaller school districts, is quite remarkable.

We, I think, have to take very substantial care in the aftermath of preventing this from becoming a block grant program not to get so pumped up with enthusiasm for the Federal Government's ca-

pacity to do this that we ignore not only the need to provide the funding, the urgent need—and, again, I associate myself with what Senator Harkin said about school breakfast programs. It is vital that we provide the resources for those programs, but I think, Mr. Chairman and Senator Harkin, I hope that we will pay attention to some of the requests, as well, to loosen some of the regulatory burdens that we currently have in place.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. For those who are mystified by the compliment of Senator Kerrey to our Distinguished Ranking Member, let me point out that Senator Harkin returned to the Congress always his "handsome self", but looking somewhat more like Abraham Lincoln.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Yet, now you see the normal, handsome Tom Harkin today for the School Lunch hearing and we are grateful that is so.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I want to add to the record a statement by Senator Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, who has long been active in championing the School Lunch Program.

Senator HARKIN. Does he comment on my beard, too?

The CHAIRMAN. Not in this statement . . . no.

[The prepared statement of Senator McConnell follows:]

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. Chairman, I commend you for holding this hearing and for your strong leadership on nutrition programs. I noticed you have scheduled this hearing to coincide with the American School Food Service Association's Legislative Action Conference.

Throughout my career, I have been a strong supporter of child nutrition programs. We in public service have no greater responsibility than to ensure the health and well-being of our Nation's children.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the School Lunch Program. I congratulate the American School Food Service Association and their members for providing high quality, low-cost meals to children across the country.

The School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are an investment in our kids and an investment in our Nation's future.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panelists on how these programs can be more efficiently and effectively administered, as well as the new and innovative methods used to meet the nutrition needs of our children.

The CHAIRMAN. We also have a statement from Senator Roberts which we will include in the record at this point.

[The prepared statement of Senator Roberts follows:]

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAT ROBERTS

I want to commend the school district in Almena, Kansas for coming up with an innovative approach to feeding programs that I think could have tremendous benefits throughout the country. In order to both cut costs and bring together older and younger generations, U.S.D. 212 has occasionally combined its Senior Citizens feeding program with the School Lunch Program. Students are able to eat with their

grandparents, high standards of nutrition are maintained for both Almena's older and younger Americans and costs to the Federal Government for administering feeding programs are lowered.

As Congress and the President ultimately engage in discussions to balance the Federal budget, we must be careful to keep an eye on the people who will ultimately be affected by our actions and especially our children. Providing children with healthy meals so that they can worry about their multiplication tables instead of their empty stomach should remain our highest priority. However, it is also the responsibility of the Federal Government to ensure that U.S. tax-dollars are being used efficiently.

Almena has shown how a small town, by using a little ingenuity, can deliver a more streamlined, cost-effective Federal program at the local level while at the same time strengthening families throughout the country. I hope the USDA will see the wisdom of proving communities like Almena with as much flexibility as possible so that they can adequately and efficiently serve their citizens.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, it is a privilege to welcome our first panel of witnesses. They are—and I will ask them to testify in the order that I introduce them—Janet Bantly, who is president of the American School Food Service Association. She is a registered dietitian working for the Enfield, Connecticut Board of Education. She has worked in the child nutrition field for over 19 years and has traveled to many Far Eastern countries, including Japan, Taiwan and Thailand, to observe and advise those countries on their programs.

Our second witness will be Mary Kate Harrison, director of School Food Service for the Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, Florida. She is also a registered dietitian and she runs an innovative school breakfast program which she plans to discuss at this hearing. She is also active in Tampa's Hunger Coalition.

Our final panelist in this first panel will be Tami Cline, director of Nutrition and Education for the American School Food Service Association. She has 10 years of experience in school food service in the Boston area public schools.

We will ask that you make your comments in 5 minutes, although there will be a little leeway in the event that is impossible. The full statements that you have prepared will be made a part of the record, and then we will ask you to respond to questions.

Ms. Bantly?

STATEMENT OF MS. JANET BANTLY, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION, ENFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Ms. BANTLY. Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin, Members of the committee, I am Janet Bantly, president of the American School Food Service Association, and we appreciate the opportunity very much to testify this morning and we would like to thank you for scheduling the hearing to coincide with our legislative Action Conference.

With me today, as you know, is Mary Kate Harrison, who is chair of our Public Policy and Legislative Committee and director of Child Nutrition in Tampa, Florida, and also Tami Cline, the ASFSA Director of Nutrition and Education, and a few hundred members for support. Our counsel, Marshall Matz, is with us as well.

Chairman Lugar, I would like to start by commending you personally for the leadership that you have provided on child nutrition. There is tremendous support for child nutrition on this

whole committee, and subcommittee Chairman McConnell, Senator Harkin, Senator Leahy, and all Members of the committee have been very supportive over the years and we appreciate it.

With all due respect to your Colleagues, Sir, however, your leadership on the block grant issue in the 104th Congress is simply a profile in courage. You gave new meaning to the expression "just say no," and in the process you saved the Child Nutrition Programs from losing their entitlement status and we just thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Ms. BANTLY. We are very proud of the Child Nutrition Programs that we administer. In our opinion, the Federal nutrition programs are a part of what makes the United States so special. Without good nutrition, children cannot grow and fully develop and the very best teachers cannot teach if a child's stomach is empty.

There are several current issues, Sir, that we would like to bring to your attention this morning. First, the Nutrition Education and Training Program. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act left the NET program without funding for fiscal year 1997. NET teaches school food service professionals how to prepare healthy meals and it provides curriculum for teaching children healthy eating habits. Adequate NET funding is crucial to implementing the Dietary Guidelines.

Secretary Glickman has redirected $3.75 million to NET as a stop-gap measure to keep the Program structure in place. This is an important program and we would appreciate anything you could do to help pass a $6.25-million supplemental appropriation to maintain the current services for the NET program at $10-million-a-year.

Second, the implementation of the Dietary Guidelines. The Healthy Meals for Children Act allows schools to use any reasonable approach to implement the Dietary Guidelines. Last October, Mr. Chairman, you wrote to Secretary Glickman, along with Senator Leahy, Chairman Bill Goodling, and Congressman Miller, regarding the implementation of this legislation. As of this date, however, regulations have not been written.

Third—reauthorization; the 105th Congress is charged with reauthorizing those child nutrition programs that expire on September 30, 1998. ASFSA supports reauthorization of all programs that need reauthorizing. We appreciate that dollars are scarce, to say the least. However, we can continue, hopefully, to move forward on making these programs easier to administer and reduce the amount of paperwork.

Child nutrition programs continue to be very difficult and very time-consuming to administer. Each year, we send free and reduced-price applications home to everyone enrolled in participating schools, and that is about 45-million children. Approximately 15-million applications for free and reduced-price meals are received from parents and must be processed. Each day, we must count and identify each student at the point of service to determine the eligibility category for that particular child.

Mr. Chairman, each member of our association takes his or her responsibility very seriously. We want to administer the Programs

in a manner consistent with the statutes and regulations, but we are concerned that we are losing sight of our larger goal, which is to feed children. There are children who take home food each day to feed younger siblings. There are children who secretly take food home on Friday because they do not have any other food to eat over the weekend.

After decades of improving child nutrition through the National School Lunch Program, student participation has been relatively flat over the last decade. Some schools have even dropped out altogether. Therefore, we would like to explore with you several concepts as we move toward reauthorization.

We must, of course, be accountable, but the current audit error rate system seems excessive. If a school makes an error on just one application and provides a free meal to a child who only qualifies for a reduced-price meal, that school fails its review. Frequently, the audit process seems excessive, given the amount of money that is reclaimed or at risk. There should be some type of cost/benefit analysis applied to the error rate system. We would appreciate exploring with the committee how to establish an error rate tolerance system that is consistent with the nature of the Program.

Also, we would like to explore with the committee whether it is possible to reduce our three-tier system—free, reduced-price, and paid—to a two-tier system. There are many children of the working poor who cannot afford the $.40 for a reduced-price lunch. As a result, our lowest participation is within the reduced-price category.

We would like to make it easier for more schools to qualify for provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act. Provision 2 decreases the paperwork in the Program by allowing schools to collect student income information only once every 3 to 5 years. We would like to delete the provision in the National School Lunch Act requiring schools to offer students the same milk varieties as they did the prior year, even if there was not significant demand for those varieties.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, it is our hope that ASFSA will work closely over the next year with this committee and its excellent staff, as well as with the House and USDA, to help craft a Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 that will make these programs easier and less expensive to administer.

Again, Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank you and every Member of this committee for your dedication to child nutrition. We believe these programs are an excellent investment in our future and a wise use of Federal funds.

Thank you, Sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Bantly.

Ms. Harrison, would you give us your testimony?

STATEMENT OF MARY KATE HARRISON, FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, TAMPA, FLORIDA

Ms. HARRISON. Good morning, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to add to the testimony you have just heard, and especially to talk about the important school breakfast programs.

I am Mary Kate Harrison, Food Service Director for the Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, Florida. My county

has over 150,000 students. Fifty-five percent are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price meal. My district is growing at the staggering rate of over 4,000 students every year, forcing many students to learn in schools that are over 125-percent capacity. Every day, we have 1,200-dedicated employees who work hard at preparing 135,000 meals in 160 schools.

Each day, over 75 percent of our students participate in the National School Lunch Program, but only 30 percent of our children are participating in our breakfast program. Late buses, short breakfast periods, and overcrowded dining rooms impact the number of students that can reasonably be served in a very short period of time.

Furthermore, many children do not come to school after eating breakfast. They have to leave home very early in the morning to catch a long bus ride, they have parents who leave for work before daybreak, or they just have no food available. Unfortunately, many children are just on their own from the time they wake up in the morning until their parents come home from work in the evening.

In my years of serving children and working with their teachers, I can confirm the fact that children who do not eat breakfast are cranky, lethargic, and certainly not mentally or physically ready to learn. Recognizing the positive impact breakfast has on a child's performance, my county began serving a complementary breakfast to all elementary children prior to their annual achievement tests.

In order to feed all students sufficiently, meals were packed by the cafeteria staff and delivered to each classroom by students. It was a high-energy breakfast designed to have an inexpensive food cost, but still be nutritious and easy to eat. Students ate with their classmates and teachers in a quiet atmosphere where there is no stigma attached to who is free and who pays. Believe me, they all ate their breakfast; there was no plate waste.

We received hundreds of positive comments from principals, teachers, students, parents. Fifth-grade students wrote that they enjoyed eating in a quiet atmosphere, without standing in a noisy line where they are often shoved or pushed. A third-grade class commented that they were no longer hungry in the morning. Teachers wrote that children's attention span increased and disciplinary problems were reduced. Several teachers reported that children arrived in their class on time for breakfast and that they had 100-percent attendance for those taking the test, which is a real first. Principals reported that the calm, quiet start of the day resulted in students that were attentive and focused on learning.

These overwhelming positive results showed that when we offer breakfast to all students, with no regard to whether the student is free or reduced or paid, our participation soars from a mere 30 percent on an average school day to 95 percent. Because of the demand to continue our program, we began to offer it once a month and in many cases we are now offering it once a week. Our district's commitment to finding new and innovative ways to feed children allows us to continue to offer this popular and effective approach to serving breakfast.

Breakfast programs are vital. They feed millions of school children who otherwise may never get a nutritious breakfast, and they work. Study after study after study links nutrition and learning

and, more importantly, eating school breakfast has been linked to improvements in academic performance and a decrease in tardiness and truancy.

The availability of the School Breakfast Program for all children is a critical element to achieving the education targets established by Congress and President Clinton that all children in America will start their school day ready to learn. As we approach reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 1998, I am asking that you look at all and any possibility to expand this very important program. It would be a major national investment in and commitment to the healthy growth and educational advancement of all our children.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Harrison.

We would like to hear now from you, Ms. Cline.

STATEMENT OF TAMI J. CLINE, DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION AND EDUCATION, AMERICAN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Ms. CLINE. Thank you. Good morning. Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin, and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and thank you for your support of child nutrition programs. I am Tami Cline, director of Nutrition and Education for the American School Food Service Association.

From its humble beginnings just over one-half century ago, school food service programs have grown to include over 94,000 public and private schools with a captive audience of 51-million children and young adults. With this growth has come many changes. Today's schools, students, and school meals bear little resemblance to their predecessors of 50 years ago. Menu planning and meal preparation have evolved to adapt to both the needs of the changing schools and the changing demands of students.

School food service is big business. It is the third largest noncommercial food service market. This year, schools will purchase well over $4-billion worth of food and beverages from American companies, and they employ local residents in every community across the country.

One of the driving forces of change in school food service is the change in U.S. schools and school districts. A slow but steady consolidation of school districts, coupled with expanding enrollment rates, has resulted in larger school systems and a more centralized core of customers. School food service professionals have taken advantage of this consolidation and are operating more efficient programs than ever before.

As schools have expanded their educational and recreational activities outside of normal school hours, food service operations have expanded to supply meals to this new audience. After-school snacks and meals for the elderly have become increasingly popular and are often prepared by school food service professionals with little additional labor cost.

One of the most important changes in the past 50 years is the increasing sophistication of our students as customers. Children today do more of their own purchasing than ever before. Raised in a society with fast-food restaurants on every corner and food courts

in every shopping mall, students demand variety and choice when they are making their food purchases.

School food service programs have met this challenge in a variety of ways.

Most schools now offer several choices of entrees and side dishes. Increasingly, schools are also adding ethnic, lower-fat and lower-sodium foods to their menus. With students always "on the run", schools have initiated additional delivery systems, such as "grab-n-go" bag lunches and breakfasts, and food carts strategically located throughout the school.

Though for many years schools have been serving meals that meet *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, new USDA regulations and the passage of the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act have brought that challenge to the forefront of all schools. We are very proud to report that through training and technical assistance, school nutrition programs have made great strides in meeting this goal.

There are even some statewide initiatives to assist schools in this endeavor. Minnesota is helping schools use the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health, known as the CATCH project, and California is using the Shaping Health as Partners in Education, known as the California SHAPE program. These programs have been successful because they focus beyond providing healthy school meals to actually changing students' interaction with food in every setting, even when they are at home or out with their friends.

The School Food Service side of CATCH operates within the larger student health program and California's SHAPE develops teams of school food service staff, teachers, and administrators, along with the family and the community, to provide a consistent, positive nutrition message in school nutrition programs, classrooms, and throughout the community. These are only two examples of the good work going on in schools all across the country.

Because of the new flexibility in menu planning provided by this committee last year, individual schools can choose a menu planning option that fits their budgets and fits their children's needs. Some use computer nutrient analysis, others use a new food-based menu-planning system developed by USDA, and still others have developed their own planning system based on the Food Guide Pyramid to ensure that their meals meet the goals of the Dietary Guidelines and the Recommended Dietary Allowances for key nutrients.

As you can see, the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are moving ahead to achieve a new dimension of nutrition accountability while addressing the complex demands of today's changing school environment.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify. Healthy, well-educated children are the future of this Nation. Their educational success will have a direct impact on the productivity of America, her standard of living, and her ability to compete. Also, school nutrition programs are helping to meet the challenges and work toward a better and brighter future.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

The Chair wants to mention that Senator Leahy, who has been often mentioned and praised this morning, is on the Senate floor

managing the balanced budget amendment, and I just simply wanted to mention how much we miss him. We understand his responsibility, as you do, this morning and I will include a statement that he has submitted for the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Patrick J. Leahy follows:]

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

I have always enjoyed these school lunch and breakfast hearings because I know that I am among friends.

We have fought many battles together to protect the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs—and fortunately we have won more battles than we have lost.

While I am no longer the Ranking Democrat on this committee, you are in good hands with Senator Lugar and Senator Harkin. You are very lucky to have a great friend to your programs—Senator Lugar—as Chairman I know full well what a great ally and friend he can be.

He worked very hard last Congress against some House provisions that would have hurt the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

Senator Harkin was Chair for the Nutrition Subcommittee for years, and did a masterful job protecting and nurturing nutrition programs.

As now Ranking Member of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I am please to continue to work with the Chairman of that subcommittee, Senator McConnell. He and I have worked well together on a number of nutrition issues.

I want to welcome the Vermonters in the audience—Jo Busha [Boo-shay] has done a marvelous job running Vermont's child nutrition programs. She got a well-deserved award for greatly expanding participation in the School Breakfast Program.

Connie Belevance is also here from the Orleans-Southwest Supervisory Union and is the current president of the chapter of the ASFSA in our State.

They have the job of making sure that needs of the almost 26,000 students in 300 schools are met. They do an excellent job at it.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to make sure that the School Lunch and Breakfast continue to meet the nutritional needs of children for the next 50 years and beyond.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Cline, you have mentioned extraordinary flexibility of delivery. I think one of the Programs you described as "grab-n-go." Let me just comment that others who have come before the committee have pointed out that many of us are no longer eating large lunches. As a matter of fact, many children, unhappily, rarely eat with their families at all. There are a variety of ways in which we are receiving nutrition. It seems to be infinite.

What does this mean to the School Lunch Program as you take a look at it generally? It is a large institutional program which, given the hundreds of thousands of meals described already this morning, means a certain mechanical flow. How is it possible, and is it advisable, to have varieties of delivery?

Ms. CLINE. Well, I think it is necessary to have a variety in delivery systems in order to meet our customers' needs. We see that schools, as Mary Kate had pointed out, are really expanding their school breakfast programs. That is in response to changing customer needs. We also see that many more schools are offering snacks after school in response to the fact that kids might be in the school building after normal school hours.

In addition to that, I had mentioned the food carts and the bagged meals that try to get the food to where the students are. We see increasingly a number of schools doing this just in order to make sure that kids are getting the meals and the nutrients they need throughout the day.

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The CHAIRMAN. Just to followup on one other point you made, you have a high educational objective, likewise, in all of this, at least in some of the Programs you have mentioned in which even thoughts of cardiovascular disease and problems down the trail enter into students' consciousness. To what extent should the School Lunch Program be an educational vehicle in which students understand the basis for their choices and hopefully make better choices?

Ms. CLINE. Well, I know that we all believe on this panel that school food service programs are very much a part of the educational process. However, I will bring up the issue that it is a challenge within many school districts to be positioned as a core part of the educational system and have others within the building, other administrators, really appreciate the vital role that school nutrition programs have in the overall educational success of students.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, this is a challenge that we would like to work with you on. I think it is a very important part of the school lunch business because, as you are pointing out, students are making selections and sometimes, taking a look over the shoulder of our grandchildren, they are not making very good selections, at least from a nutrition standpoint. The question is: "How do you bring about a reasoning process and educational background so that from an early time in life, people understand what is at stake?"

Ms. Harrison, I would just be curious because you mentioned the correlation between the children who came in and ate the school breakfast and were there in 1 instance, as you pointed out, 100 percent for the tests that were to occur. Is there data that you have or that you know of in the School Lunch Program nationally that shows a correlation between delivery of these school breakfasts and the breakfast program, the alertness for students, and test results, academic results, today?

Ms. HARRISON. Well, there have been many studies that have looked at how breakfast impacts academic learning. I know Tufts University has done several studies on breakfast and performance in the classroom. We, however, went back and looked at our test scores and we examined what had happened last year and then compared those scores to the year before, and they went up. It worked; they did go up. Now, how much that was attributed to our actual breakfast programs, I don't think we can say for sure until you do a long-term test on it.

However, I think it is important to note that because we offered a breakfast, the children showed up and they all came to school, where otherwise they might not have come or all showed up to take their tests, and we thought that was significant. So, just by offering the breakfast and saying we are supporting what is going on in the classroom—we are going to support this morning and all week by offering the nutrition you need to get through your academic tests—I think we were making a big statement and sending a big message to parents.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Bantly, just following through a little bit on that issue—during the work program that we had back in our home States, the week before last, I spoke to both houses of our

legislature about the need for reading proficiency for all children, the zero-defects concept that we see in industry and with products, but frequently we have compromised with children. Typically, in a first-grade class, 85 percent get it the first time through, or thereabouts, but a fair number do not.

It appears to me that there is a correlation here not only between the teaching that may not take, but likewise the preparation for the students, including nutrition, their health, and what have you. Do you have coordinated efforts with those who are working with children, because there are many who have propounded that concept that children have to universally be prepared in mathematics and literacy, now even in computer literacy, and the effects of the School Lunch Program, the nutrition program, not only at the first grade level but throughout?

What I am driving at is that we are trying to do a number of things, I would hope, in American education to make certain that every child is prepared. Yet, when you have got that exacting a standard, every child, there are good reasons why some children are not prepared, and some obviously are in the nutrition and health area. I am just curious about the coordination of your organization with teachers, with educators, with others, trying to think through how every child is to be prepared.

Ms. BANTLY. One of my favorite subjects, Sir. We feel so strongly—and Tami alluded to that—that if school food service were an integral part of the educational day that we would be able to work much more closely in these areas. We do work with the PTA and teachers' associations and principals' association, and coordinate many of our programs. On the other hand, until the community-at-large—until the educational community and the administrators believe, as we do; that this program is an integral part of everything that goes on during the day, it won't work as well as it could. We have said this for years. We believe in it very strongly, as I know you do, also.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate your underlining that. You have said it frequently, but it is very important. The battle is, in part, the appropriations we are talking about for the authorization of the Program, but where the rubber hits the road at the local level, it is also the dynamics of dietitians working with educators, with administrators, and this goes better in some places than in others.

Ms. BANTLY. Absolutely, that is true.

The CHAIRMAN. We will try to work with you so it goes better everywhere, and that is one reason for our coming together today.

Senator Harkin, do you have questions for the witnesses?

Senator HARKIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize. I am going to have to leave. I have, as we all have, other conflicts. I have Secretary Shalala over in another hearing room on labor, health and human services, and education, so I have to go over there shortly, but I just wanted to be here because I feel so strongly about the School Lunch and School Breakfast Program.

While I appreciate all your testimony, of course, I really like Ms. Harrison's testimony because I have focused on the breakfast program for several years. In 1990, there was special funding and grants to help schools start school breakfast programs. I was in-

volved in that, and then in 1994 we expanded it to the summer feeding program, also. Those grants would have amounted to $5 million in fiscal year 1997, rising to $7 million in fiscal year 1999 and thereafter—not a huge amount of money in the scheme of things, but the School Breakfast and Summer Food Startup and Expansion Programs, as I said, were ended in the 1996 Welfare Reform bill.

I guess I would just ask you a question which I think I probably know the answer to, but I want it for the record. Do you believe we should look at trying to reinstate these programs when we reauthorize the Child Nutrition Programs next year?

Ms. HARRISON. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. I just wanted it for the record.

Ms. HARRISON. Absolutely. We would like to work with you any way we can in trying to reinstate start-up breakfast grants and any other type of grants or issues that would help expand the Program to reach more students. I think what we are doing in our own county by offering, we call it complementary breakfast to all children, there is no stigma attached to who is free and who is reduced and who is paid, and everybody eats with their teacher and starts the day in a nice, quiet start and we have become part of the educational day.

Senator HARKIN. Every time I have seen it, it is a great success. Let me just say one other thing, and I mentioned it in my statement, and that is there seems to be a considerable amount of wasted food. I am concerned about that. I think kids ought to have a respect for food. Sometimes, as I have observed lunch lines, maybe too much is put on their plate or they don't get what they want. Of course, you can't please every kid every day. I understand that, too.

It is a concern and I just don't know how we address it. I am sure that you look at it constantly, how to address this problem of wasted food. I just wonder if you have thoughts on that, anyone here. I am just not addressing you.

Ms. HARRISON. We, like many districts in our country, offer a lot of choices, so we are allowing many of our customers to choose what they would like to eat. And by offering them those choices, it is more likely that they will eat what they choose. Offer versus serve, which is something that we have been using for many, many years, also helps. Those children can pick up or refuse a component that they may not eat. Therefore, they are more likely again to eat what they have chosen.

I think many of us are offering choices to meet dietary issues, ethnic differences, cultural differences, and we are doing that in order to give our customers more choice in what they would like. I think we have looked and looked, and we look at those trash cans, too—every day—because it is a concern and we don't want to waste money, but I think we are doing everything we can by offering choices.

It also goes back to the classroom. Our nutritional education program is vital in trying to teach students how to eat, the correct choices to make, and we want support for our nutrition education and training program in the classroom. That has been critical in the past when it started in the late 1970's, through the 1980's, and

up until now to helping children make the right decisions. It does start in the classroom, also.

Ms. BANTLY. I would like to add to that that one of the big factors, I believe, is the time allowed to eat. The average amount of time that a child has is 20 minutes. That means he or she gets in line, waits in line, chooses his food, goes through, pays, and has to eat. I doubt that many adults would appreciate having 20 minutes.

The other thing is the current concept of block-granting has even prohibited some children from having a lunch hour at all, and this, I know, is a problem up in the Northeast where I live. I have seen this.

Senator HARKIN. Senator Landrieu just wanted to followup on that.

Senator LANDRIEU. Can you just explain that comment about block-granting——

Ms. BANTLY. I didn't mean to say block-granting. That is not a word we like to use. I meant block-scheduling.

Senator LANDRIEU. Oh, block-scheduling.

Ms. BANTLY. Yes.

Senator LANDRIEU. I wasn't quite sure how block-granting—okay, block-scheduling.

Ms. BANTLY. We are over that one, hopefully.

Senator HARKIN. You are saying that block-scheduling further reduces the amount of time?

Ms. BANTLY. It actually eliminates a lunch hour, depending on how it falls. I have seen this in some of the schools I have been in.

Senator HARKIN. I know my daughter is in block-scheduling. I will have to find that out.

[Laughter.]

Senator HARKIN. Lastly, let me just say again for the record that, you know, last summer the USDA issued the proposed rule on yogurt to make it part of the Breakfast and Lunch Program. I know you got a lot of comments in support of it from around the country. Let me just say that I know that certain sectors of our meat industry in this country have started to put on their spurs on this one, but I want you to know that as a representative of a State that produces a lot of beef and a lot of pork and a lot of poultry and a lot of meat, I think we have to move ahead with yogurt. Kids like it, they eat it, it is good for them, and if it brings them into the Program, so be it. I am all for it.

[Applause.]

Senator HARKIN. I just think that we just can't allow certain segments to demand that we continue on as we have in the past. Quite frankly, I have argued with some of my meat people. I say, look, you know, if this brings kids into the Program, they will have yogurt and maybe they will want to have some meat a little bit later on, too. You don't know. We all know that kids like yogurt and it is good for them, so keep on it.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Harkin.

Senator Landrieu?

Senator LANDRIEU. Mr. Chairman, thank you for conducting these hearings and for accommodating the schedule to have such a large group on such an important subject. I have read the testimony as I was sitting here, and I am sorry for being just a few minutes late.

In addition to the expansion for School Lunch and School Breakfast which my Colleagues have worked so hard on, you comment on how we could make the whole program just work better—more flexibility, less paperwork, more choices, more direction at the local level, and less interference from Washington; to provide, the best possible service to the children and to the school system.

Could one of you comment on the auditing or the two-tier system that was written briefly in your comments, for the record?

Ms. CLINE. We think there are probably several things that could be done to streamline the Programs and would very much welcome the opportunity to work with the committee, especially as we go through reauthorization. One of the things brought out in Janet Bantly's testimony was the three-tiered system of qualifying students for either free, reduced-price, or full-paid meals. Not only do we feel that many students and families are slipping through the cracks of this system, it also sets up quite an administrative burden within the school cafeteria using those categories everyday for every single student. That is just one area.

Another area is, as schools are becoming more like community service areas for after-school activities, we talked a little bit about not only school breakfast, but after-school snacks. These programs are expanding their boundaries beyond the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and if there could be more consistency among the administration across all the Federal nutrition programs, that would help out schools.

Senator LANDRIEU. Does anyone else have anything?

Ms. BANTLY. There is a lot of paperwork, and we have said that many, many times over. I feel if we really had an opportunity to work with those who make the regulations that we perhaps could streamline a lot of that. There are many areas that we could still have the accountability and yet perhaps make it easier to administer at the local level.

Senator LANDRIEU. Mr. Chairman, I hope that we could pursue that and perhaps some sort of informal working committee could be organized, since we have, some time on this, to work to come up with ideas about reducing paperwork involved with the program. One of my goals as an education advocate is to allow teachers to teach, principals to principal, and school nutrition workers to do their job, and to stop filling out forms, attending meetings that are unnecessary——

[Laughter.]

Senator LANDRIEU. So, the children can get the help they need, and the attention. I am all about flexibility and accountability, but, it gets to the point of literally just ridiculousness with some of

these rules and regulations. I think we have to have more trust and more accountability, but it works hand in hand.

So, I really want to work with you, Mr. Chairman, on ways that we have just got to focus on more flexibility at the local level and just more common-sense handling of some of these programs. It will come back to us in higher test scores, higher morale, a better spirit, and better children who are performing better, which is what we want.

Now, I am a mother with a 5-year-old who—his teachers say—eats two plates of food everyday completely, so I am a happy mom. However, whatever we can do, Mr. Chairman, I want to work with you on it.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank you very much, Senator Landrieu, and you are correct that we have had this hearing early in the year largely because of the National Association meeting. It also gives us ample time, as a committee, to think through the testimony we have here today, and then to have followup from many of you, who have responsibilities with the other association; and with the other independent groups that we are going to hear from, so that *we do it right*.

We have a year to do this authorization. My hope is that as the year progresses, some of the ideas will begin to gel; that we can vet these through each Senator—and staff—and have a very large consensus—large majority—in favor of reform.

I thank each one of you for your testimony today and for your continuing leadership. We ask you stay closely in touch with us.

Ms. BANTLY. Thank you.

Ms. CLINE. Thank you.

Ms. HARRISON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair will now call the second-distinguished panel. I will introduce the members of that panel in the order that we will ask them to testify. First of all, Dr. Dennis Bier is professor of Pediatrics and program director of the Pediatric Center of Research at Baylor College of Medicine, and director of the USDA Children's Nutrition Research Center. Dr. Bier is a medical doctor who served as a member of the USDA/DHHS 1995 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee and has extensive experience in the area of child nutrition.

He is joined by Mr. Michael Berry, vice president of Food Operations and Concept Development at the Disneyland Resort in California, which is the largest single-site food operation in the United States. Prior to joining Disney 1.5 years ago, Mr. Berry served as director of Dining Services at Harvard University, where he won the three highest awards in the food service industry. In January 1997, Mr. Berry was profiled in *Nation Restaurant News* in "Food Service Industry and the 21st Century." Mr. Berry is personally very interested in child nutrition programs and during his time in Boston was actively involved with the Greater Boston Food Bank.

Our final witness in this panel will be Judy Dodd, a nutrition educational consultant to schools, business, industry, and the media. She is also an assistant professor of Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh. She has experience with the Dairy Council as a food service manager and as the WIC director.

We are delighted to greet all three of you. Dr. Bier, would you proceed with your testimony?

STATEMENT OF DENNIS BIER, M.D., DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S NUTRITION RESEARCH CENTER, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Dr. BIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to be able to testify in front of you and the other Members of the committee. I have submitted written testimony, so I will really only summarize some of the key points here.

The CHAIRMAN. The three statements will be made a part of the record.

Dr. BIER. As you mentioned, I am the director of the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine. For the record, even though this is a USDA center, I am not a government employee, and I am a professor of pediatrics at Baylor. As you mentioned, I was a member of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

I am not an expert on the operation of the School Lunch Program itself, but I would like to make a few comments about current dietary recommendations for children. First, I support the nutrient-based regulations for the National School Lunch Program. These agree with the Dietary Guidelines and with all other major nutritional recommendations for America's health. For example, they agree with the nutritional recommendations made by the National Cholesterol Education Program, the American Heart Association, the Committee on Nutrition of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and others.

Second, I would like to point out that the nutrition community has agreed really for the last 50 years on the principal approach to good nutritional health, which includes variety, balance, and moderation. All agree, further, that we should focus on the nutrient content of the diet as a whole and not on specific foods.

Now, in my testimony I gave you some recommendations that were made by the noted nutritionist Ancel Keys in 1959 which are really virtually identical to *the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* that were published in January of 1996. In other words, despite what you read in the popular press which generally emphasizes the differences that certain nutritionists have, the principal message has been one of agreement for at least half a century.

Now, the importance of good nutrition is readily apparent. We know that of the 10-leading causes of death in this country, almost half have some nutritional basis and antecedents. What we know is that most of the antecedents begin in childhood and progress into adult life. The major nutritional problems in children, one of which, for example, is obesity—we know very well, for example, that obese children become, as a rule, obese adults.

Now, the solution to these problems really, to me, should be two-fold. The first is that based on the preponderance of available scientific knowledge, we need to apply our current information to improving children's diets today. The second is that we have to support both basic and applied research to answer the remaining questions in the future.

The information necessary for the first approach is already provided in the Fourth Edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

that, as I mentioned, came out in January 1996. These guidelines apply to school-age children and urge consuming a varied diet and paying attention to moderation of certain nutrients. These recommendations are based on the solid interpretation of current science which is, in fact, the charge of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

The second approach which is required is to support some of the nutrition research necessary to answer the questions that still remain. Nutrition research is really only a tiny fraction of spending on food programs, and I believe that should be increased. For example, we now have to make certain general, one-size-fits-all nutrition recommendations for the entire school-age population. With the new information that is becoming available, the new tools that are coming available, for example, through molecular biology, we are beginning to get the means necessary to identify which specific individuals might be at risk for nutritional consequences in adult life and we need to pursue these approaches to help us identify those individuals so that we can make specific nutrient recommendations for at-risk individuals and not for the population as a whole.

I hope that the National School Lunch Program will continue to efficiently and effectively supply the important nutrition education and other nutrient needs for America's children. I also hope that, with your help, we will be able to continue to answer basic scientific questions that will allow you to make the types of policy decisions that you need to make to advance the future or our most important national resource, which is our children.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and will answer questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Bier.

Dr. Berry, would you give us your testimony?

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BERRY, VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOD OPERATIONS AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT, DISNEYLAND RESORT, ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

Dr. BERRY. Mr. Chairman and Senators, it is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the topic of school food service and the important role it can play in the development of our most precious asset, our children. I must say I was very surprised to receive an invitation to appear before this committee, as I have never worked in the School Food Service area. So, I must assume that my presence today is the result of a well-received speech I gave before the American School Food Service Association national convention in Phoenix in January.

During that presentation, I tried to share my insights with the membership on how they might bring magic into their school cafeterias. Today, I am here to share a similar message and hopefully to offer some you might find stimulating, eye-opening, and even useful.

If you are remembering back to your own grammar school days, you may also be thinking that the words "magic" and "cafeteria" form a strange oxymoron. However, I believe based on my own experience that there is a powerful connection, and I think our schools can and have tapped into it.

While there are many factors contributing to the present status of school food service programs, in general they can be viewed in several overriding categories, including: *one*—defining their roles and mission; *two*—the capital constraints and priorities; *three*—the lagging understanding of some of the new technology that is available; *four*—general management issues; and, *five*—fostering creativity in a bureaucratic system. While I am prepared to focus more on the latter in my prepared comments, I have strong opinions I am happy to share with the committee in your follow-up questions on the other areas.

In the late 1970's, there was a renewal of sorts on how collegiate campuses delivered quality food service to their customers. I was part of that generation of managers which sought to find marketing and customer-focused answers to higher education's food service challenges. While the answers are not the same, I believe the issues we faced were amazingly similar to those facing K–12 today.

The reason this renewal in collegiate food service started is because college cafeterias had become fueling stops for students rather than an extension of an otherwise enriching environment. This may be happening today in our grammar schools. I worry that some administrators and managers have become so focused on the issues of counting nutrients, following mandated directives, and completing the necessary paperwork that a holistic approach to our children's food needs has been lost.

So often, I see school systems choosing quick solutions to important issues, like bring fast food into grammar school food service. This is not the only answer. There is an opportunity to take a broader perspective and concern ourselves not just with nourishing children's stomachs, but their souls as well. It was against that context in 17 years in the noncommercial segment that I addressed the members in Phoenix last January and both challenged and applauded them on their efforts to seek better solutions to their problems.

I must also say that my remarks are based solely on my own personal opinions and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of my current employer, the Walt Disney Company. I am in no position to make policy for the company in the area of school food service. This is not an issue we are focusing on as a potential business interest, nor is it a field we have commercial interest in other than as responsible citizens, caring parents, and members of many communities we impact.

Just one other relevant knowledge base I will call upon is the last 5.5 years as director of Dining Services at Harvard, where the students endearingly referred to me as the mealtime messiah. At Harvard, our team created a dining experience that students not only enjoyed, they looked forward to. We took a broken bureaucratic system and infused it with imagination, optimism, a dose of creativity and magic. We pushed the boundaries to extend our thinking beyond the traditional view that service and quality alone equal value, to the belief that it is the total experience which creates value. I think this applies to the School Food Program today.

Because of the constraints of time, I will focus on grammar-age feeding. However, you should keep in mind that through an itera-

tive process, all these could apply to different ages. Let me give you just a couple of examples.

As you scan your local communities, you can see that restaurant dining has taken on a new look. It is often called *eater*-tainment, where people expect a degree of interaction, involvement and entertainment in order to feel they receive real value for their money. The idea behind this trend is that restaurants become an experiential destination, a place where you want to be, where you are engaged in the total experience of a meal and it exceeds your every expectation.

I think this concept, not in its entirety, can be taken from the commercial industry and transplanted into our schools. In this way, the cafeteria becomes more than a place where kids go to fuel up, but it becomes an experience, a destination, a place where students really want to be. Whether it is viewed as an escape from the rigors of study or an extension of the school day experience, the issue may be how can schools create an atmosphere where kids can go to eat and just feel good about being there.

Kids like being in a place which is theirs, for them, and about them. So, part of the question is: "How do you create such a space?" How do you transform it from a place to eat to a destination? Perhaps there is a way to insulate the cafeteria from the outside world and the demands of learning, a midday refuge for young minds. It may become a place where learning occurs but on subjects children choose.

Just think back to your own grammar school cafeteria, probably a big rectangular room with long tables, few aesthetics, and stainless steel serving lines. That is still the case today. What is interesting about the memory? First, so little has changed. Carry that to today. How many of you choose a cafeteria when you decide to go out for a meal? There is no magic, no sense of place, no desire to even go there.

If this is the status quo in some schools, then the cafeteria will never become a destination. It will never realize its full potential to become a midday respite, a place to learn, somewhere to be with friends, a place to laugh, or even a place to seek comfort. It will just be a cafeteria. Yet, with a little creativity, a little cost, schools could breathe magic into that very same space.

While in my remarks—and I see I have extended my time—I explain how we might do that, let me just go on to perhaps close and I will take the rest in questions, as it is in my written testimony.

It is very important that not only in the receiving line, in the servery, but most importantly in the dining room that we create a space that is not just one common space. I think of most grammar school cafeterias as large, unattractive, multipurpose rooms. Yet, as human beings, each of us finds relaxation in a different way and we are drawn to different spaces and types of ambience.

Why not create different zones within that common room so children can choose where they are most comfortable? Once they have, they can relax in the space they most enjoy. Some will want high-energy places, while others will choose more quiet, contemplative surroundings. Give them these places. Surely, a rectangle can still be divided into four smaller rectangles.

As I mentioned briefly before, the cafeteria could have various activities going on, in addition to eating. Perhaps each day of the week could have a different theme or activity, like storytelling. Or we may consider serving the meal in a different way, like hosting family-style where the children would go to the table and the food would be passed around on various platters. Many of them never see this at home. This might break the monotony of line service and give the kids a sense of family, comfort and community. The really courageous manager might even use the opportunity to subtly teach etiquette and table manners and the entire meal could become a learning and sharing moment.

Let me close by saying at its most basic level I would expect our communities what they want of their school food service program. The suggestions and ideas I have offered can only happen when communities and our Government at all levels choose to release creative talents on the important issues of inschool child nutrition.

One final thought. Food is not only about the nourishment of the body, but also of the soul. It is my opinion it is a shame to feed the souls of our children with fast food. There is a better solution.

Thank you for letting me appear before you today.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Berry.

Ms. Dodd?

STATEMENT OF JUDITH L. DODD, ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL DIETETICS/NUTRITION, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, ALLISON PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Ms. DODD. Good morning. It is a privilege to appear before this committee and to have the opportunity to thank you, Senator Lugar, and the other Members of the committee for the past and present support you have shown for child nutrition programs.

I am Judy Dodd, a registered dietitian and a person with experience as a nutrition education consultant to and supporter of child nutrition programs. My interactions have been with children, food service staff, parents, and teachers. It is this perspective, that of a nutrition professional working inside yet outside of school-based nutrition services, that has shaped this testimony. I will be sharing trends, observations, and my concerns on the nutrition status of this vulnerable population group.

School meals are a critical component in the health and well-being of our Nation's children. Studies continue to confirm that children who participate in meals at school are more likely to meet their needs for key nutrients. The importance of breakfast in preparing a child for learning continues to be documented. Research is finally beginning to give us the evidence of what food and nutrition professionals and educators have known for years. It is difficult to teach a hungry child.

Offering nutritious meals at school is an investment in the health and learning potential of children. The food provides children with critical nutrients, but it is the choice of foods, the presentation, and the accompanying education that serve as a learning

experience for children to learn to recognize and taste a variety of foods.

Although children who live in poverty have the greatest need, nutrition-related problems are apparent at all income levels. At a time when all expenditures in government-supported programs are being scrutinized, it is imperative to examine current needs and to support programs that contribute to our children's present and future. I offer these thoughts.

There is a need to offer children the safety net of nutritionally-balanced meals. Children are taking more responsibility for their own food choices and for those of their younger siblings, yet may have less opportunity to practice healthful eating. Studies indicate that ⅓ to ½ of all children have responsibility for their own food choices at breakfast and lunch. The 1995 USDA Food Consumption Study indicates that on any given day, two-thirds of school-age children consume ¼ to ⅓ of their total calories outside of home. There is less opportunity for the traditional model of learning to prepare food and to expand food choices in the home with a full-time adult role model.

Along with providing critical nutrients, the goals of school meals provide a model for balanced eating, a standard for recognizing reasonable choice, and an opportunity to try new foods. Meals at school represent a teaching tool for a healthy lifestyle. This leads to my second point and a number of concerns.

There must be a comfortable and realistic fit of nutrition and education if we are to achieve the goal of providing nutritious meals at schools. Although studies support a downward trend in the percentage of calories from fat in the reported diets of children, there is a documented increase in childhood obesity. Between 1988 and 1991, obesity rates have more than doubled among children between ages 6 and 17.

The Bogalusa Heart Study and NHANES III have shown that children are eating less fat than they did 20 years ago, but total calories consumed by children is increasing, thus perhaps accounting for much of the lower percentage of total calories from fat.

At the same time, activity level has dropped dramatically in children. A 1996 Surgeon General report notes that nearly half of all young people ages 12 to 21 reported no vigorous daily activity. Safety in neighborhoods and lack of adult supervision after school may force a child to spend what used to be active play time to inactivity in front of a video game, a computer, or a television. Complicating this picture is the current trend away from physical activity in some schools and the elimination of recess.

On the other end of the spectrum, children are being pulled into a "fear-of-fat" subculture that is part of adult thinking. In a study of 9- to 11-year-old girls, half of 9-year-olds and 80 percent of older children stated they were dieting to lose weight. We are seeing children as young as six in treatment for obsessions with dieting and weight.

The calorie needs of children must be examined in light of current activity levels. Applying dietary guidelines to meals is a positive step, but must be considered guidelines, not absolutes, not hammers. The availability of meals that meet a child's needs is important, but they must also model a pattern for a healthy lifestyle.

Providing adequate time to participate in these meals, classroom support to try new foods, and opportunity to build an appreciation for lifetime sports are integral parts.

Children have ready access to low-nutrient-dense, high-fat foods. Encouraging children to try new foods or to select healthy foods requires more than putting these foods on a menu. Children are unlikely to try a new food without the support of marketing and education. Qualified and knowledgeable school food service directors and staff who can focus on child nutrition are imperative.

School food service is under constant pressure to meet the demands of children, adults, administrators, and regulations. Not losing money can be the driving force, regardless of a commitment to nutrition education. This is a time for partnerships. Parents, teachers, all caregivers, have a responsibility to support goals of meals at schools.

Studies indicate children introduced to new foods in the classroom are more receptive to trying new foods in the cafeteria. The Nutrition Education and Training Program has shown successes, in spite of limited dollars. If we are to continue tax dollars for meals, I believe it is critical that we support nutrition centers, not feeding stations. The School Lunch Program was established to meet identified needs of our Nation's children. Today's needs are different, but just as critical. Providing nutritious meals is an investment in a child's ability to reach his or her potential. Combining that food with education provides support for building healthy lifestyles for our population.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Dodd.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Bier, you mentioned in your testimony the fact that many children have very different dietary needs and that things have progressed sufficiently that we could begin to offer perhaps some analysis of what was required in individual cases or even small groups, as opposed to the totality of the school.

How could this be done? Administratively, could you give us some ideas as to how a creative program at a school might begin to take a look at some individual needs of a child?

Dr. BIER. Well, most of the things that I was talking about in that regard are largely at what I could call the real research level today. For example, we know of certain genes that affect cholesterol metabolism that result in very significant cardiovascular disease even in young adults. These are tools which have largely been applied to small groups on a research level. I really don't believe that they are ready to immediately apply to schools, but once additional data on that type of specific risk factors are obtained in research studies, then one can design ways to look at children who may carry those genes and make specific recommendations for those children in the school circumstance.

The CHAIRMAN. Certainly, thoughts have come to us from Ms. Dodd's testimony about the obesity of children at an early age, and that is apparent, I am certain, to each of us who are in school cafeterias. Leaving aside maybe the farther reaches of research and taking a look at genes and development, what is appropriate as we

just take a look at children as they are, anecdotally, there in the cafeteria? What can we do about that?

Dr. BIER. Well, I think most of the testimony of Mr. Berry and Ms. Dodd really addressed that. I think this is an issue of allowing children to understand through the educational process and through the modeling of their peers, teachers, and the like, what is healthy for them, what is a good body image, what are the consequences of getting obese, and so forth. These are habits, body image issues, which are settled very early in childhood and for which I think there is a lot of evidence that us being able to improve the education of children with regard to healthy food will, in fact, lead to a better and more healthy adult dietary lifestyle.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Dodd, picking up from that, you mentioned that children 9 to 11, I think, as you recalled, were already talking about dieting.

Ms. DODD. Dieting, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And others even earlier worried about body shape and obesity, and what have you. Can you amplify more, as you take a look in a visionary way at the School Lunch Program, what we can do effectively—Dr. Bier is correct that more information coming to the children and an educational component coming into choices of this sort is critical, but will you give us the benefit of your expert witness?

Ms. DODD. I would love to do that. This is a time for personalization. I totally agree with that. This is also a time that school food service cannot be held responsible for everything that is a problem in a child's life, and it seems to me it is time that we begin to look at parents and teachers and the school environment as a whole, and how, in fact, they are encouraging some very poor habits in children, especially the elimination of recess, the lack of emphasis on physical education, and the lack of education in the classroom that looks at the total person rather than somebody's distorted image of what low-fat eating should be about.

My other thought on this whole issue is having qualified school food service directors can make a major difference. We have many areas in our country that don't have the benefit of somebody who can personalize, who can work with the school nurses, who can work with the families. I would see that in the best of all possible worlds, we would have that support, if not in the individual schools, in regions or in States. We have States that model this, West Virginia being one that I am familiar with.

We need to look much more closely from a standpoint of what that meal can offer, but that has to be something that the family and the child supports. There is no way we are going to ramrod good nutrition down the throat of a child any more than we are going to change adult behaviors. It is going to be a slow process and my encouragement would be to look at how much success we have had in school districts where we have started with the young children and we have given them the total approach. It works, but it is going to require a total approach. It is not going to work if we go piecemeal, as we have done in the past.

The CHAIRMAN. I think we would all agree with that. Obviously, each of you has testified as we have these annual hearings that societal pressures, lack of parental interest in these issues, plays a

very large part. Yet, part of the strength of this program is understanding all these weaknesses in our society, and what we can do as school people, even given all of that. We really can't be responsible for all of it, but this is a remarkable safety net for many children.

Let me just comment that I appreciate your mention about the total curriculum, including physical education, recess, the sense of activity, or even safety factors that regrettably confine many children, for safety, to their rooms or to lack of activity. It seems to me again and again—and I am going to ask Mr. Berry about this in a moment, but we have had testimony, likewise, that as school budgets decrease and physical education is eliminated, or team sports or art programs, ways in which people participate in which people participate outside of the academic classroom, a very considerable impacting of all of these things sort of compound on each other and once again come back to the nutrition situation we are talking about here.

I think *USA Today*, maybe, in the general press today has tables State by State of the percentage of Americans who are obese as adults, and in some States this now approaches one-third of the entire adult population of the country; in States that are doing fairly well, maybe one-fourth. This is a serious problem with the 10-leading causes of death, whether it is adults or children, and a correlation all the way through. This is a very, very critical issue for America, but it comes back, often, to these school situations where choices have to be made, as you say, by society, by parents, and they impact upon each other. I appreciate your underlining that.

Dr. Berry, I want to let you have more opportunity, because in your testimony you do mention ways in which this magic may occur; in fact, from your own experience at Disney or in other situations, how magical characters serve the food, or we identify the Cookie Monster or we think of other ways in which this is livened up.

Explore with us a little bit not only your imagination, but things that you have seen that have worked so that all of us here at this conference today may be stimulated and will go back to our cafeterias or rectangular spaces, or what have you.

Dr. BERRY. Sure. Again, the focal point is creating a destination because kids hang in destinations. They don't go where they don't want to be. It starts from that very entrance and that needs to kind of be a decompression zone. They need to get away from one environment into another, whether this is a freestanding building or some other way that it is insulated.

I referred in testimony to how we build the berm around our park to keep it separated from the outside world. Well, perhaps we need a figurative berm around the eating place so that, again, it has a sense of place that is created and is unique and offers us something different and a decompression.

When you arrive in the servery area, the servery needs to invigorate the spirit and awaken it because it is a different environment and is meant to send a different dynamic than the classroom. I was speaking to grammar-school age. Drop those counters down so that they are at grammar-school kids' height and the servers behind

them are not standing in white uniforms and looking down on them. It is not a very invigorating or inviting environment.

We teach our cast members at Disneyland to bend over and to engage at the eye level of the child. It is the same thing here, but drop it down. Don't use stainless steel; use pans that have color. I could even take the issue of the healthy food. That is the one food you want to present in a very distinctive manner. Take that food, if it is a healthy pizza, and put it in the shape of some animal that they easily recognize. They will go for it. In a way, you are helping them choose the healthy option by the way that you present it. I use the example of a cookie. Which one do you think is going to sell, a round one or the one in Mickey Mouse's head shape? It is clear. You help them through these choices in a very subtle but a very useful manner.

Then if you go into the dining area, that dining area can be many things to many people and we all find our comfort zones in different ways. Not one of us would always choose the same environment. Give them that opportunity to choose an environment. Some will want high-energy. Others want more contemplative space. That dining room can be used in many different ways at many different times. The choice of, for instance, the family meal that I spoke of—that is just a break. Think how nice it would be if you didn't go through the serving line when you came in, if it was served family-style on platters. You are learning sharing, you are learning etiquette.

You know, we had the benefit of eating at home with our parents and they provided us with a lot during that time. Many of these kids don't have that. I saw a statistic yesterday. Eighty-two to 84 percent are raised by a single parent or both parents are working. Eating out is the rule, eating at home is the exception. Maybe the school can be that nurturing environment that they are missing sometimes at home by well-intentioned parents. So, that is kind of what I was thinking.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say that many of you, I suspect, who are with us in the hearing today will want to learn more about the concepts that each of the witnesses in both of our panels has been discussing. This has been remarkable testimony, and because it is truncated in 5-minute verse, with a little bit of leftover, each of us has an appetite whetted for more.

I would just encourage all of you to correspond with the committee to make certain that you understand the bibliography of other works and papers, as well as the testimony we have had today, that our witnesses have been involved in. So, this will be a creative learning experience continuing for all of us.

Senator Landrieu, do you have questions for the witnesses?

Senator LANDRIEU. Just one, and I know we are getting ready to wrap up, but I would like for someone to comment on the research that is currently being conducted in terms of nutritional research for adults versus children. Are there ways that we can better redirect some of those research dollars or any comments that you might have regarding research for child nutrition?

Dr. BIER. Well, of course, since I do research in children's nutrition, I would like them redirected toward me.

Senator LANDRIEU. You would like them redirected a lot.

[Laughter.]

Dr. BIER. Other than that, I think that this is clearly a whole portfolio. In order to answer important questions in pediatric nutrition, we have to know what the outcome is at the adult level. So, for instance, let's use the issue of calcium intake and osteoporosis. We can't answer that question definitively only in pediatrics. We have to have information as women grow and age, so we need to have the appropriate dollars spent in the areas where the questions are the most significant.

I think there are major issues in pediatric nutrition that deal with research at the time of conception and embryogenesis. We know this from the stories of folate and neural tube defects. We know that there are extremely important issues with regard to nutrition in fetal life and the result of low-birthweight babies, babies who are ill from the beginning of their life, and what effect this has on them as they grow and age. We also know that there are very significant questions, for example, that span all ages—those of obesity and osteoporosis that I mentioned—and I think the money has to be where the question is.

Senator LANDRIEU. Well, I guess my question is—and maybe, I didn't ask it appropriately—"Do you have any specific comments about research dollars and how they are being allocated among adults versus children?" In some of my experience, I have recognized that many of our research models are for male models as opposed to female models, and I am wondering if the same sort of disparity of dollars is apparent in child nutrition and research, and any information that you might provide to me on that or to the committee——

Dr. BIER. I am sure that I can provide you some specific numbers after the hearing, but I think it is very clear that given—I personally believe that virtually none of the important nutrition issues that face America today and in the future will be answered in adult life, primarily. They will be answered in—well, they will be answered in the adult women who is giving birth to her children. They will be answered during pregnancy, early infancy, and during childhood. I think that the money being spent on those issues is disproportionately low, given the ultimate return for convincingly answering the questions that are going to be important for us in the future.

Ms. DODD. I would echo the same sentiments. I want to add one side of this, and that is I have a major concern that a lot of premises that are being used as absolutes these days are based on adult-related nutrition studies and on adult-related studies of an adult who was a child in a different era. My concern would be that we don't jump from cause and effect to application putting all of our premises on what school service should be based on what child nutrition should be on adult-related research.

Although I don't have absolutes on that, I am reading into something you are saying that you have this concern and I will try to give you some evidence of this.

Senator LANDRIEU. Mr. Chairman, if we could have the staff look into that in terms of research dollars and how they are being allocated, I think it would help us in a variety of different ways to have the right science and the right research behind what we do from here on out.

The CHAIRMAN. I agree, and I think that Dr. Bier's response to your question, Senator Landrieu, is especially intriguing that a disproportionate amount of research probably should be given to the problem of a mother of a child and the prenatal and the infancy situation, as well as small children. If that contention is correct, most of either the good or the damage that is going to occur in that period—probably, we are having a disproportionate amount of research of people who are our age now.

Ms. Dodd's point, it seems to me, is an important one, too, that on adult research, these are adults now, all of us who had a different sort of nutritional childhood, maybe, than children are having now. Trying to work our way back through that may lead to some incorrect results. I don't know that we know that, but it is an interesting idea to explore.

I would ask it the other way around—if children have a better nutritional pattern as a whole now, and whether that is likely to lead to a better adulthood. Anecdotally, many people are writing that it isn't working out that way; that as adults—someone mentioned moderation before, but we have not been as careful in that respect. Even if we knew more about nutrition, the sheer number of calories consumed maybe by adults as well as children defeats the objective.

Do any of the rest of you have comments before we conclude the hearing?

Ms. DODD. I have one comment, if I could make it, that hasn't come up in questions. I would see a need for partnerships with industry, too. I have a major concern that a lot of the foods that we are now putting into school food service are low-nutrient-dense, high-carbohydrate, in an effort to try to bring down the percentage of fat. I believe we are feeding into some real issues that are likely going to come back and be a backlash when we start looking at the total nutrition of a program. To look at this is going to require some very strong nutrition science and qualified people to interpret it.

Thank you.

Dr. BERRY. Just 1 other thought I have, also, is that to ask any group to provide this holistic approach in 20 minutes is just almost to the point of ludicrous, and it is a shame. This is one of the few chances that we can really script young people at a young age. After that, they are pretty well scripted; and if we can't afford more than 20 minutes now, when will they ever be able to afford more than 20 minutes? I think it is really a shame.

Senator LANDRIEU. I just wanted to say I enjoyed all the testimony. Mr. Berry, you are doing a wonderful job at Disneyworld. Maybe the problem is there are too many choices there. When I went, it was hard to figure out where we wanted to go eat. However, you are doing a great job and keep up the good work.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we thank you all for attending this hearing. We thank each one of you in food service for your attendance and we are hopeful that the dialogue that commenced this morning will continue. As Mr. Berry says correctly, 20 minutes or whatever we are able to devote to it is too short, and so we will try to extend it through correspondence and through the sending out of materials to those of you who are interested.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

Tami J. Cline, R.D.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your support of child nutrition programs. I am Tami Cline, director of Nutrition and Education for the American School Food Service Association. I am a registered dietitian with over 10 years of experience operating school foodservice programs in Massachusetts.

From its humble beginnings just over one-half century ago, school foodservice programs have grown to include over 94,000-public and -private schools with a captive audience of 51-million children and young adults. With this growth has come many changes. Today's schools, students and school meals bear little resemblance to their predecessors of 50 years ago. Menu planning and meal preparation have evolved to adapt to the needs of both changing schools and the changing demands of students.

School foodservice is big business! It is the third largest noncommercial foodservice market. This year schools will purchase well over 4-*billion* dollars worth of food and beverages from American companies and employ local resident sin every community across the country.

One of the driving forces of change in school foodservice is the change in U.S. schools and districts. A slow but steady consolidate of school districts coupled with expanding enrollment rates have resulted in larger school systems, and a more centralized core of customers. School foodservice directors have taken advantage of this consolidation and are operating more efficient programs than ever before.

As schools have expanded their recreational and educational activities outside normal school hours, foodservice operations have expanded to supply meals to this new audience. After-school snacks and meals for the elderly have become increasingly popular and are often prepared by school foodservice personnel with little additional labor costs.

One of the most important changes in the past 50 years is the increasing sophistication of our students as customers. Children today do more of their own purchasing than ever before. Raised in a society with fast-food restaurants on every corner and food courts in every shopping mall, students demand variety and choice when making their food purchases. School foodservice operations have met this challenge in a variety of ways. Most schools now offer expanded menus including numerous choices of entrees and side dishes. Increasingly, schools are also adding ethnic, lower fat and lower sodium foods to their menu. Also, with students always on the run, schools have initiated additional delivery systems such as "grab-n-go" bagged meals and food carts strategically located throughout the school.

Though for years many schools have been serving meals that meet *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, new USDA regulations and the passage of the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act have brought that challenge to the forefront for all schools. We are very proud to report that, through training and technical assistance, school nutrition programs have made great strides in meeting this goal.

There are even some state-wide initiatives to assist schools in this endeavor. Minnesota is helping schools use The Child and Adolescent trial for Cardiovascular Health, known as the CATCH project. California is using the Shaping Health as Partners in Education, known as California SHAPE Program. These programs have been successful because they focus beyond just proving healthy schools meals, to actually changing students' interaction with food in every setting, even when they are at home or out with friends.

The School Food Service side of the CATCH project operates within the larger student health program. California SHAPE develops teams of school foodservice staff, teachers, administrators, family and the community to provide a consistent, positive nutrition message in school nutrition programs, classrooms, and throughout the community.

These are only two examples of the good work going on in school districts across the country. Because of new flexibility in menu planning provided by this committee last year, individual schools can choose a menu planning option that fits their budgets and their children's needs. Some use computer nutrient analysis, others a new food-based, menu-planning system based on the Food Guide Pyramid to ensure their meals are meeting the goals of The Dietary Guidelines and the Recommended Dietary Allowances for key nutrients.

As you can see, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program are moving ahead to achieve a new dimension of nutrition accountability while addressing the complex demands of today's changing school environment.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify. Healthy, well-educated children are the future of this Nation. Their education success will have direct impact on the productivity of America's workforce, her standard of living and her ability to compete. School nutrition programs are helping them meet the challenges of school and work toward a better and brighter future.

Dr. Dennis Bier

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you.

I am the director of the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC). I am also a professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine. My clinical specialty is pediatric endocrinology with a focus on diabetes, and I came to nutrition research because of the impact of diet on diabetes. I was a member of the Advisory Committee to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services on *The 1995 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

The Children's Nutrition Research Center is one of the ARS Human Nutrition Research Centers and is dedicated to understanding the optimal nutritional needs of mothers and their children from conception through adolescence. We are uniquely well-suited to address these issues because, under a cooperative agreement with Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital, Congress has helped create the most complete children's nutrition research facility in the world, housing plant, animal, and medical scientists, and effectively linking basic agricultural research with nutritional investigations in humans.

As part of the ARS, we serve the School Lunch Program and other USDA food assistance programs in an advisory capacity, providing nutritional science information and consultation. I cannot speak to you as an expert on the School Lunch Program itself, or on its funding and policies, but let me make a few comments about the state of current dietary recommendations for school-aged children.

First, let me make it clear that I support the general nutritional recommendations for the School Lunch program since these are consistent with recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, and other health and professional organizations, including the American Heart Association, the National Cholesterol Education Program, and the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition.

Second, I want to emphasize that, despite the impression you might get by reading the popular press, the nutrition community has agreed for at least 50 years that the principal approach to good nutritional health involves variety, balance, and moderation. All agree further that one should focus on the nutrient content of the diet as a whole and not on individual foods since, per se, there are no good or bad foods.

As long ago as 1959, the noted nutritionist, Dr. Ancel Keys, made the following recommendations:

(1) Don't get fat; you are fat, reduce;

(2) Restrict saturated fat;

(3) Prefer vegetable oils to solid fats, but keep total fats to under 30 percent of your total calories;

(4) Favor fresh vegetables, fruits, and nonfat milk products;

(5) Avoid heavy use of salt and refined sugar;

(6) Good diets do not depend on drugs or fancy preparations;

(7) Get plenty of exercise and outdoor recreation;

(8) Be sensible about cigarettes, alcohol, excitement, and business strain—and do not worry.

These recommendations are remarkably similar to current advice in *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Further, despite bookstore volumes filled with "magic bullet" approaches to nutritional health, the nutrition community has always emphasized that whole foods, not supplements, are the of a healthy diet because foods contain a vast array of both known and as yet unidentified health promoting components that are not present in supplements.

NUTRITION-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS

The importance of good nutrition is readily apparent. Of the 10-leading causes of death in the United States, 5—heart disease, cancer, strokes, diabetes, and atherosclerosis—have nutritional components, and evidence supports the fact that these nutritional risk factors begin in childhood at a time when eating habits are also being established. Some nutritional antecedents are well-established, for example the relationships between cholesterol and cardiovascular disease, between iron deficiency and poor mental performance, and between childhood obesity and subsequent adult obesity. Other known antecedents are equally compelling—for example, the relationships between poor nutrition education and established childhood eating patterns with the persistence of these patterns into adult life.

The principal nutritional problems of school-aged children are obesity, iron deficiency, inadequate calcium intake, overconsumption of saturated fat and cholesterol, insufficient calorie intake and hunger with associated food insecurity and growth failure, and eating disorders such as anorexia and bulemia.

- The number of overweight children and adolescents in the United States has more than doubled in the past decade, from 5 percent to 11 percent of children 6- to 17-years-old (Troiano, *et. al., Arch. Pediatr. Adol. Med.*, 149:1085–1091, 1995), and obese children are more likely than normal weight children to become obese adults (Williams and Kimm, *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Set.* 1993).
- Obese children have been found to consume a significantly greater proportion of calories from total fat and saturated fat than non-obese children, placing them at greater risk for developing heart disease later in life (Gazzaniga and Bums, *Amer. J. Clin. Nutr.*, 58:21-28, 1993).
- Data from the Bogalusa Heart Study indicate that children with serum cholesterol levels in the middle and high range showed significantly greater fat intakes than those children within the lowest serum cholesterol category (Nicklas, et. al., *J. Adv. Med.* 2:451–474, 1989).
- Children ages 5- to 14-years-old averaged only about 66 percent (maximum = 100 percent) of a healthy eating index designed to provide a single summary measure of diet quality (The Healthy Eating Index, USDA, CNPP–1, 1995).
- Children's dietary intakes of total fat, saturated fat, and sodium are exceeding levels suggested by *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Adolescent boys also exceed recommended intakes of dietary cholesterol (Kennedy and Goldberg, Nutr. Rev., 53:111–126, 1995).
- Data from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study indicate that school-age children's diets exceed dietary guidelines for fat, saturated fat, and sodium. Based on this study of the daily intakes of approximately 3,350 children enrolled in grades 1 through 12, children averaged 34 percent of their daily calories from fat, compared with the Dietary Guidelines goal of 30 percent. Children's diets averaged 13 percent of calories from saturated fat, compared with the Dietary Guidelines goal of 10 percent. Average sodium intakes were 4,633-milligrams-per-day, almost twice as high as the 2,400-milligrams-daily recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (Burghardt and Devaney, *The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study: Summary of Findings*, USDA/FCS, 1993).
- Only 1 in 5 children consumes the recommended 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, even when credit is given for vegetables in mixed dishes such as

pizza or in sandwiches (Krebs-Smith, et. al., *Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med.*, 150:81–86, 1996).

- Children are also not getting enough of some essential nutrients in their diets. Only about 70 percent of children ages 0 to 5 years and just over 50 percent of girls ages 12 to 18 years meet the Recommended Dietary Allowance for iron. Only about 2/3 of children ages 0 to 11 years, 50 percent of boys ages 12 to 18 years, and 40 percent of girls ages 12 to 18 years meet the Recommended Dietary Allowance for calcium, which is needed to prevent osteoporosis (Kennedy and Goldberg, *Nutr. Rev.*, 53:111–126, 1995).

In the long-term, I believe that our approach to optimal childhood nutrition must be two-pronged. First, based on the preponderance of available scientific information, we must apply our current knowledge to improving children's diets today. Second, we must support both basic and applied nutrition research to answer the remaining questions in the future.

APPLYING CURRENT NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE

The information necessary for the first approach is provided by the fourth edition of *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, released on January 2, 1996. These Guidelines apply to school age children and urge consuming a varied diet as well as attention to adopting principles of moderation in consumption of fats, sugars, and sodium. The Guidelines do, however, acknowledge that infants and toddlers under the age of 2 have special nutrient needs, and should be fed according to the advice of a health professional. Furthermore, the Guidelines provide special guidance for children in the specific guidelines dealing with body weight and fat intake. These recommendations are based on a solid interpretation of current science.

- The fat guideline recommends that children should gradually adopt a diet that, by about 5 years of age, contains no more than 30 percent of calories from fat.
- The weight guideline emphasizes the need for children to eat healthful diets to promote growth and development at any body weight. It encourages children to eat a variety of foods, including lowfat milk products and other protein-rich foods. The importance of physical activity, rather than food restriction, is emphasized to prevent overweight. Major efforts to change children's eating habits should be discussed with a health professional.

Further, nutrition promotion efforts and improvement of school meals can lead to positive changes in eating habits by exposing children and adolescents to healthful, good tasting lowfat foods. *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are being incorporated into all USDA food assistance programs, including the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. This is important since research has shown that familiarity is a significant factor in developing children's food preferences. As "the appetite grows by what it feeds on," school meals provide an important opportunity to encourage children to learn to enjoy healthful foods (Fisher and Birch, *J. Amer. Diet Assoc.*, 5:759–764, 1995). In addition, nutrition educators have concluded that programs that use educational methods directed at behavioral change as a goal—for example, food-based activities and modeling by adults—are more likely to result in changes in eating behavior than programs which focus only on distribution of information (Contento, et. al., *J. Nutr. Educ.*, 27:277–422, 1995).

Some health professionals have expressed concern that well-meaning parents are unduly restricting their children's food intake, resulting in impairment of growth and development. Others, such a joint working group of the Canadian Pediatric Society and Health Canada, believe that 5 years of age is too young an age to begin limiting dietary fat intake to 30 percent of calories and, instead, suggest phasing in the fat reduction by the end of linear growth in late puberty. However, research has demonstrated that a diet containing 30 percent of calories as fat is both safe for ensuring the growth and development of school-aged children and effective in reducing their risk for developing heart disease later in life.

- The Dietary Intervention Study in Children (DISC) is an ongoing randomized controlled clinical trial of diets containing lowered fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol in children. After 3 years in the study, children following diets providing 28 percent of calories from total fat, less than 8 percent of calories from saturated fat, and less than 150-mg-cholesterol-per-day were found to have no differences with respect to measures of growth and development than children in a control diet group. Furthermore, blood levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (*so-called* "bad cholesterol") decreased significantly in the children on the lower-fat diet as compared to the control group (Lauer, *et. al.*, J. Amer. Med. Assoc., 273:1429–1435, 1995).

- In a just-published study, researchers from Finland report that even very young children can obtain adequate nutrients from a reduced-fat diet. Parents of children 8 months of age were given repeated dietary counseling on fat intake and nutrient intake and their children were followed until they were 4 years old. The children in the intervention group consumed significantly less saturated fat than children in a control group from the age of 13-months onward, but there were no discernible detrimental effects on growth, development, or nutritional adequacy of overall dietary intake. The authors concluded that "individualized dietary counseling that led to clear changes in the type of fat intake had minimal effect on vitamin or mineral intakes." (Lagstrom, et. al., *Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med. 151:181–188, 1997).*

IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION RESEARCH

The second required approach is to support the research necessary to answer remaining questions and provide the needed scientific instructional support for public policy and food assistance programs. The payoff is, admittedly, a long way off but is, nonetheless, a very substantial one both in terms of heath care dollars and in terms of an enhanced quality of life for American adults.

For example, we now must make general nutritional recommendations for the entire school-aged population because we do not yet know with high precision which individual children are at risk for the major chronic diseases in adult life. Through the new discoveries in the sciences of genetics and molecular biology, we are now obtaining the tools that will help identify which specific individuals are at high risk for diet-related diseases. Use of this information will allow us to individualize dietary recommendations to those who need them most. Attacking these problems in childhood will pay health dividends to society for many decades, while treating them in adulthood involves much greater expense and a shorter period of benefits.

Similarly, once we can identify specific genotypes responsible disease late in adult life, there is a high likelihood that we will be able to answer important questions about the relationships between childhood dietary intake and the consequences in older adults much more quickly and much less expensively. Currently we must resort to difficult and very, very expensive long-term longitudinal studies in order to address these relationships.

In addition, I'm, sure you have all read about the newly discovered adipose tissue hormones, such as leptin, that serve to signal the brain about an individual's body fat content and which provoke regulatory responses in the brain that alter food intake and energy expenditure. There is now also evidence that physical activity is another signaling agent in this system. Understanding how circulating chemicals such as leptin induce psychosocial behavioral events in the central nervous system is opening up whole new avenues for understanding the regulation of appetite and satiety. Research is the area is absolutely essential for us to learn how to change a child's responses to food and, therefore, eating behavior when necessary—as is the case of the overeating which is driving an epidemic of obesity in this country.

Finally, new research tools are now making it possible to design healthier foods of enhanced nutrient composition. For example, one of the research programs at the CNRC is directed toward understanding the mechanisms by which plants store calcium and iron. The goal is to enhance the available amounts of these essential nutrients in plants. Iron deficiency anemia and poor calcium intake are significant problems even in this country, and these inadequacies are critical in many parts of the world where meat and dairy products are not a regular part of the diet.

Further, this research program has also developed the methods of labeling edible plants with stable, *non*-radioactive isotopes in order to safely and directly measure the absorption and bioavailability of nutrients such as calcium and iron from plant products. Of course, we have many additional programs that address important nutritional issues in children of all ages, from those born prematurely and weighing barely more than 1 pound to healthy young adults who have just finished puberty, but there is not sufficient time to discuss these in detail.

I thank you for inviting me to testify. It is my hope that the School Lunch Program can continue to efficiently and effectively meet some of the food needs of our Nation's school children, and influence their dietary habits for a healthier long-term lifestyle. I also hope, with your support, that the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine will continue to be able to provide the basic nutritional science that will help you make the important policy decisions necessary to best feed America's most valuable national resource, its children.

Dr. Michael Berry

It is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the topic of school food service, and the important role it *can* play in the development of our most precious asset . . . children.

I must say, I was very surprised to receive an invitation to appear before this committee, as I have never worked in the School Food Service area. So, I must assume that my presence today is a result of a speech I gave before the American School Food Service Association National Convention in Phoenix on January 18.

During that presentation, I tried to share my insights with the ASFMA membership on how they might bring "magic" into their school cafeterias. My thoughts on the subject were based on many years in collegiate food service combined with my more recent employment with The Walt Disney Company—specifically, Disneyland.

If you are thinking back to your own collegiate experience, you are right now desperately trying to connect the words "magic" and "college cafeteria" to come up with an image you can remotely relate to. Having failed at making this connection—because you've blocked out any and all memories of what you actually *ate* in college—you are, at this point, *really* hoping I'm basing my speech more on the Disney experience, right?

Well, the truth is, I do think there's a connection between the words "magic" and "school cafeteria" and I do think you can tap into it. I'm confident of this because I've experienced the successful results of bringing the two together.

In the 1970's there was a renewal of sorts in how campuses delivered quality food service to their customers. I was part of that new generation of managers which sought to find marketing, and customer-focused answers to higher education's food service challenges; and, I believe the issues we faced were amazingly similar to those facing you today.

College cafeterias had become fueling stops for students, rather than an extension of an otherwise enriching environment. Do you see this happening for schools around the country?

I worry that some administrators and managers have become so focused on the issues of counting calories, following mandated directives and completing the necessary paperwork, that a holistic approach to our children's food needs has been lost. So often, I see school systems choosing quick solutions to important issues, like bringing fast food into grammar school cafeterias. This is not the only answer. There is an opportunity to take a broader perspective and concern ourselves not just with nourishing children's stomachs, but their souls as well.

It was against that context that I addressed the members in Phoenix last January, and both challenged and applauded them on efforts to seek better solutions tot their problems. It's within this context that I will rely on my Disneyland experience to elevate our thinking.

Let me also add, that I was speaking of Mike Berry, and not The Walt Disney Company. I am in no position to make policy for my company in the area of school food service. This is not an issue we are focusing on as a potential business interest for our company, nor a field we have commercial interest in other than as responsible citizens, caring parents and members of the many communities we impact.

While I have many thoughts on how to approach the issue, let me review some of what I shared with the ASMA members, in the context of lessons I have learned from Disneyland about imagination, creativity and eliminating barriers to thinking.

Since the founding of Disneyland in 1955, we have followed Walt Disney's belief that our business is more than business, it's a Show that we put on for our guests every day in an attempt to create a magical experience.

So, we've pushed the boundaries in our food service business to extend our thinking beyond the traditional view that service and quality equal value to the belief that it's the total experience which creates value. I think this applies to the School Food Service Program, too.

It's easy to relate quality and service to school food programs, but thinking about it in terms of Show, seem like a pretty big stretch, I know. I believe it can be done and I challenge you to join me in imagining the possibilities.

Because of the constraints of time, I will focus on the dining experience of grammar school-aged children. However, you should keep in mind that these very same ideas may apply to other age groups.

Let me give you only a couple of explicit examples of how one might think differently about the grammar school dining experience.

As with out theme parks, *the cafeteria must become a destination* . . . a place where students really want to go, because they believe it's for them and about them. Whether it's an escape from the reality of school or an extension of the experience,

the issue may be, how can schools provide a place where students can go to eat and just feel good about being there?

At Disneyland, we insulate our theme park from the intrusions of the outside world with the intention of creating a unique sensory experience for all who visit. We consider ourselves successful, if, among other things, we have created a well-ordered world free of chaos and an escape from the hectic pace of contemporary American society. Perhaps, the cafeteria could be figuratively insulated—a mid-day refuse for young minds. This could also help in providing a space within the school that feels unique—a destination.

If the cafeteria destination is merely a big rectangular room with long tables, few aesthetics, and stainless steel serving lines, it will not create any magic, and it will never become a popular destination. It will not realize its potential to be a mid-day respite and desired socialization area for children, but rather a uninspired pit stop. Yet, with a little creativity, and perhaps very little cost, schools could bring magic to that very same space.

Let's start as we would with any popular destination—the entrance with its queue line. For us that might be on a popular ride such as Indiana Jones or Star tours. The line is long, but because of attention to detail, we engage our guests immediately with show elements that entertain even while they are waiting. The same attention to arrival detail is needed in the school cafeteria. Great destinations have a welcoming and engaging entrance.

This well-designed queue also serves as a buffer, a time to decompress and unwind. Make it fun while relaxing. It's as simple as putting something in the queue that engages the students as they wait, from ever-changing posters to inter-active technology. Maybe the space walls could be easily designed so that young artists could create art while they waited in line, thus tapping their creativity while making the time go by. They need to be engaged while unwinding from the rigors of the classroom. The cafeteria will only be a respite and destination if it is different from the rest of the school experience.

When the children enter the servery, it needs to be comfortable and accessible. Drop the counters to the kids' size. Surely kids are not feeling welcomed when the cafeteria line is way above their head, and well-meaning folks in white uniforms look down on them. Is this the right dynamic? At Disneyland we know that we must always see things from the child's perspective so we would drop that counter, costume our service employees (we call them "Cast Members") in bright and vibrant colors, and make the servery fun.

As for the food in the serving counter, it must comply with the unwritten but sacred rules that children eat by. Rule 1: Make the food fun and easy to see. Don't serve it in stainless steel pans, use vibrant colors that ignite the senses. Rule 2: No mystery food. Kids want to know what they are eating. You can, however, present the familiar food in the unusual way. For instance, a cookie can be round or it can be shaped like Mickey Mouse. Which one do you think they will choose? Rule 3: Kids don't like to eat food that has touched other food. They like food that they can play with and combine themselves, and often with their hands, but they do not like food that has been served on a plate touching other food.

The servers must do their part by being outgoing and enjoy dealing with children. We believe our Cast Members play a critical role in our Show, therefore, we "cast" people for particular roles. So, if you don't like children, then perhaps being in the school cafeteria isn't the right job for you. Hire people that are willing to bend over and meet and greet children at their level. We call it the "personal touch", and it may be missing in many school cafeterias.

My memory of most grammar school cafeterias is of a large, unattractive, multi-purpose room. Yet, as human beings, each us finds relaxation in a different way and we are drawn to different space(s). Create different zones within that common room, so that children can choose where they are most comfortable. Then they will be able to relax, as they have freely chosen which space they most enjoy. Some will want to be in high-energy space, while others will choose more quiet, contemplative surroundings. Give them those choices. Surely a rectangle can still be divided into four smaller spaces, each with its own sense of space and suited to differing personalities.

The cafeteria could have various activities going on in addition to eating. Perhaps, each day of the week could have a different theme or activity, like storytelling. Or, we might consider serving the meal in a different way. Imagine that instead of going through the serving line the kids could enjoy family-style dining, where they would go to a table, and the food would be served on various platters. It would break the monotony of line service, and give the kids something to forward to. The really energetic manager might even use this meal to subtly teach etiquette and table manners, and the entire meal would also be a lesson in sharing.

One final thought: For years and many generations of children, a mouse and his friends have helped define our company. If I were operating a grammar school cafeteria, I might develop a cast of characters that would bring joy to my students, and a personality (or brand) to my product. Kids will always identify with—and find joy in—real, and imaginary characters. For some, it was the "Cookie Monster", others, "Barney the Dinosaur", and today, "Winnie the Pooh and Tigger" are huge. Characters bring life, and imagination together for children.

I have taken a few minutes to touch on what is, perhaps, a superficial level of the School Food Service. Many people far more knowledgeable than me will have better and more creative solutions. My purpose on January 18 before ASFSA and today before this committee is to suggest some quick thoughts on another way of viewing the issue. As we say at Disneyland, "to get you thinking out of the box and imagining the possibilities."

At the most basic level the issue to me boils down to local communities deciding what they want of their school food service program. My simple, or crazy—depending upon your perspective—scenarios can only happen when communities and our Government at all levels choose to release creative talents on the important issue of in-school child nutrition. What is it that each community wants, and what resources are we willing to bring to bear. For food is not only about the nourishment of the body, but also of the soul. It would be a shame to miss the opportunity to address this important issue of body and souls with fast food in every school. There *IS* a better solution.

Thank you for permitting me to appear before you today.

Mary Kate Harrison, R.D.

Good Morning. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to add to the testimony you have just heard, and, specifically, to talk about the School Breakfast Program. I am Mary Kate Harrison, Food Service Director for the Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, Florida. My district has over 150,000 students, 55 percent of whom are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price meal. My district is growing at the staggering rate of over 4,000-new students each year, which challenges students to learn in schools that are over 125-percent capacity. Every day, we have 1,200 dedicated foodservice employees who work hard at preparing and serving over 135,000 meals from 160 schools.

Each day, over 75 percent of our students participate in the National School Lunch Program, but only 30 percent of our children participate in the Breakfast Program. Late buses, short breakfast periods, and overcrowded dining rooms impact the number of students that can reasonable be served in a short period of time. Furthermore, many children do not eat breakfast at home because they have to leave home early in the morning to catch a long bus ride, they have parents who leave for work before daybreak, or they just have no food available at home. Unfortunately, many children are "on their own" from the time they wake up in the morning, until their parents come home from work in the evening. In my years of serving children and working with their teachers, I can attest to the fact that children who do not eat breakfast are cranky, lethargic, and certainly, not ready to learn.

Recognizing the positive impact that a nutritious breakfast would have on a child's performance, Hillsborough County began offering a "complimentary" breakfast to all elementary children during their annual testing week. In order to feed all students efficiently and rapidly, meals were packed by the cafeteria staff and delivered to each classroom by a student. These "high-energy" breakfasts were designed to have an inexpensive food cost, but still be nutritious and easy to eat. Students ate with their classmates and teacher in a quiet atmosphere, where there was no "stigma" attached to who was getting a "free" meal and who was paying full price.

We received hundreds of positive comments from principals, teachers, students, and parents. Mrs. Carr's fifth-grade students wrote that they enjoyed eating in a quiet atmosphere, without standing in a noisy line where they were often pushed and shove. Mr. C's third-grade class commented that they were no longer hungry in the morning. Teachers wrote that children's attention span increased and disciplinary problems were reduced. Several teachers reported that children arrived in their class on time for breakfast, and that they had 100-percent attendance for those taking the test—a first! Also, principals reported that the calm, quiet start of the day resulted in students that were attentive to their teachers and focused on learning instead of focusing on disrupting the class.

The overwhelming positive results from testing week showed that when we offered breakfast to all students, with no regard to whether the student was eligible

for free or reduced or paid meals, our participation soared from 30 percent to 95 percent. Because of the demand to continue the Program, we are now offering a complimentary breakfast once-a-month to all students. Our district's commitment to finding new and innovative ways to feed children allows us to continue to offer this popular and effective approach to serving breakfast.

Breakfast programs meet a vital need—they feed millions of school children who otherwise might not eat a nutritious breakfast; and they work. Study after study has linked nutrition and learning. More importantly, eating school breakfast has been linked to significant improvements in academic performance and a decrease in tardiness and truancy. The availability of the School Breakfast Program for all children is a critical element to achieving the education target established by Congress and President Clinton in *Goals 2000* that all children in America will start their school day ready to learn.

As we approach reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 1998, I ask that you look at all possibilities to expand the School Breakfast Program. It would be a significant investment in, and commitment to, the healthy growth and educational advancement of all our children.

Judith L. Dodd, MS.RD

Good morning Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee. I am Judy Dodd, a registered dietitian and adjunct assistant professor of Clinical Dietetics/Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh.

It is a privilege to be asked to testify. In addition, I am grateful for the opportunity to thank Senator Lugar and this committee for past and present support shown for child nutrition programs.

For over 20 years, I have worked as a consultant to and a supporter of child nutrition programs. My interactions have been with children, food service staff, and caregivers of children including both parents and teachers. It is this prospective, that of a nutrition professional working inside yet outside of school-based nutrition services, that has shaped this testimony. I will be sharing trends, observations, and concerns on the future of nutrition programs for children and the nutrition status of this vulnerable population group.

There is no doubt that school meals are a critical component in the health and well-being of our Nation's children. Studies continue to confirm that children who participate in meals at school are more likely to meet their needs for key nutrients. The importance of breakfast to preparing a child for learning continues to be documented. However, studies indicate that on any given day at least 60-percent leave the house without breakfast. Research is beginning to document what food and nutrition professionals and educators have noted for years—it is more difficult to teach a hungry child.

Offering nutritious meals at school is an investment in the health and learning potential of children. The food provides children with critical nutrients. The choice of foods, the presentation, and the accompanying education serve as learning experiences as children learn to recognize and taste a variety of foods. Although children who live in poverty have the greatest need, nutrition related problems are apparent at all income levels. At a time when all expenditures in government-supported programs are being scrutinized, it important to examine current needs and support programs that contribute to our children's present and future. I offer these thoughts:

MEALS AT SCHOOL AS A SAFETY NET

There is a need to offer children the safety net of nutritionally balanced meals. Children are taking more responsibility for their own food choices and those of their younger siblings yet may have less opportunity to practice healthful eating.

- Studies indicate that one-third to over half of all children have responsibility for their own food choices at breakfast and lunch. (International Food Information Council);
- The 1994 USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Study indicated that on any given day two-thirds of school-aged children (age 6 through 19) consume ¼ to ⅓ of their total calories outside of their home. Fast food and the school cafeteria are leading choices.
- There is less opportunity for the traditional model of learning to prepare food and to expand food choices in the home from a full-time adult role model. This leaves children with the option of self-learning.

- Along with providing critical nutrients, goals of school meals include providing a model for balanced eating (balance), a standard for recognizing reasonable portion sizes (moderation), and an opportunity to try new foods (variety). Meals at school can be a teaching tool for a healthy lifestyle.

SUPPORTING A REALISTIC FIT OF NUTRITION AND EDUCATION

This leads to my second point and a number of concerns. There must be a comfortable and realistic fit of nutrition and education if we are to achieve the goals of providing nutritious meals at school.

- Although studies support a downward trend in the percentage of calories from fat in the reported diets of children there is a documented increase in childhood obesity. Between 1988 and 1991 obesity rates have more than doubled among children between ages 6 and 17. (National Health and Nutrition Examination Study, NHANES III). According to the Bogalusa Heart Study and NHANES, children are eating less fat then they did 20 years ago.
- Total calories consumed by children may be increasing, thus accounting for the lower percentage of total calories from fat. (NHANES III).
- At the same time activity level has dropped in children. A 1996-Surgeon General Report noted that 25 percent of all young people (ages 12 to 21) report no vigorous daily exercise. Safety in neighborhoods and lack of adult supervision after school may force a child to spend what used to be active playtime to inactivity in front of a video game, computer or television. Complicating the picture is the current trend away from physical activity in some schools and the elimination of recess.
- On the other end of the spectrum, children are being pulled into the "fear of fat" subculture that is part of adult thinking. For example, in a study of 9- to 11-year-old girls, half of the 9 year olds and 80 percent of the older children stated they were dieting to lose weight (ikeda and Naworski). Children as young as six are in treatment for obsessions with dieting and weight.

The calorie needs of children must be examined in light of current activity levels. Applying current standards such as *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to meals is a positive step but should presented as guidelines, not absolutes. The availability of meals that not only meet a child's needs but also model a pattern for a healthy lifestyle is the first step. Other factors include providing adequate time to participate in these meals, classroom support to try new foods, and an opportunity to build an appreciation for lifetime sports.

Meals at school can be the center of a health-friendly environment for children. But there must be an effort to provide appealing meals and to encourage children to participate. Children have ready-access to low nutrient dense, high-fat foods. Encouraging children to try new foods or to select healthful foods requires more than putting these foods on a menu. Children are unlikely to try a new food without the support of marketing and education.

Qualified and knowledgeable school food service directors and staff who can focus on child nutrition are imperative. School food service is under constant pressure to meet demands of children, adults, administrators and regulations. Not losing money can be the driving force regardless of the commitment to nutrition. Learning to eat requires resources just like learning to read.

This is a time for partnerships. Parents, teachers, all caregivers have a responsibility to support the goals of meals at school. Studies indicate that children introduced to new foods in the classroom are more receptive to trying new foods in the cafeteria.

Nutrition education as a component of school meals is not a new concept. The Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) has shown successes in spite of limited funding.

If we are to continue to provide tax dollars for meals at school, I believe it is critical that we support nutrition centers—not feeding stations.

The School Lunch Program was established to meet the identified nutrition needs of our Nation's children. Today's needs are different but just as critical. Providing nutritious meals is an investment in a child's ability to reach his or her potential. Combining that food with education provides support for building healthy lifestyles for a population.

Thank you.

American School Food Service Associatin

[JANET BANTLY IN REPRESENTATION.]

Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin, Members of the Committee, I am Janet Bantly, the president of the American School Food Service Association. We appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning and would like to thank you for scheduling this hearing to coincide with our Legislative Action Conference. With me today is Mary Kate Harrison, the chair of our Public Policy and Legislative Committee and the director of Child Nutrition in Tampa, Florida, also Tami Cline, the ASFSA Director of Nutrition and Education—and a few hundred members for support. Our counsel, Marshall Matz, is with us as well.

Chairman Lugar, I would like to start by commending you personally for the leadership you have provided on child nutrition. There is tremendous support for child nutrition on this committee. Subcommittee Chairman McConnell, Senator Harkin, Senator Leahy, and all Members of the Committee, have been very supportive over the years. With all due respect to your Colleagues, however, your leadership, Mr. Chairman, on the block grant issue in the 104th Congress was simply a profile in courage. You gave new meaning to the expression "Just Say . . . *No*" and, in the process, saved the Child Nutrition Programs from losing their entitlement status. Thank you very much.

As you know, the National School Lunch Act was passed over 50 years ago, "to safeguard the health and well being of the Nation's children" after a large number of World War II recruits failed their physicals due to malnutrition-related problems. Today, the National School Lunch Program serves 26-million-children-each-day in approximately 94,000 schools. Children who participate in the National School Lunch Program receive more of the essential nutrients they need for proper physical and cognitive growth than children who do not participate in the Program. Over 14-million low-income children receive up to half of their daily nutrients from the School Lunch Program.

The School Breakfast Program serves 6.5-million-children-each-day. Studies show that children who participate in the School Breakfast Program perform better on standardized tests, are on time and in school more often than children who do not participate in the School Breakfast Program. When a school initiates a breakfast program, there are fewer disciplinary problems, and it is easier for the teacher to teach the class.

We are very proud of the Child Nutrition Programs we administer. In our opinion, the Federal Nutrition Programs are a part of what makes the United States so special. As a country, we are saying that it is important, as a matter of national public policy, to feed our children and others who need assistance. It cannot be said too often that children are our most important national resource and without good nutrition they cannot grow and fully develop. The very best teachers cannot succeed if a child's stomach is empty.

We are very pleased by the progress we have made to implement *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, thereby making a good program even better. ASFSA has supported the Dietary Guidelines since the first edition was released in 1980. We were pleased to work with this committee in 1994 to include a requirement in the National School Lunch Act that all schools comply with the Dietary Guidelines. Subsequent legislation was also enacted to allow schools the flexibility to use "any reasonable approach" in implementing the Dietary Guidelines. We feel this flexibility is extremely important given the disparity in resources that exists in schools throughout the country. Our association is working with our members to raise their awareness of the Dietary Guidelines and to provide the technical assistance school foodservice professionals need to ensure their meals are nutritionally complete.

Mr. Chairman, there are several current issues we would like to bring to your attention:

Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET).—The 1996 Welfare Reform Act (Public Law 104-193) left the NET Program without funding for Fiscal Year 1997. NET is an essential resource in the cafeteria—and the classroom—that teaches school foodservice professionals how to prepare healthy meals and provides curriculum for teaching children healthy eating habits.

Secretary Glickman has redirected $3.75 million to NET as a stop-gap measure to keep the Program structure in place. This is an important program and we would appreciate anything you could do to help pass a $6.25-million supplemental appropriation to maintain current services for the NET Program at $10-million-per-year. As you know, the Clinton administration did request a supplemental appropriation for NET.

Dietary Guidelines.—The Healthy Meals for Children Act, (Public Law 104-149) allows schools to use "any reasonable approach" to implement the Dietary Guidelines. Last October (October 2, 1996), Mr. Chairman, you wrote to Secretary Glickman along with Senator Leahy, Chairman Bill Goodling and Congressman Miller regarding the implementation of this legislation. As of this date, final regulations have not been promulgated. For the law to be effective, the rule making should be completed by early summer, so schools can begin using the increased flexibility provided by H.R. 2066 in time for the 1996-97 school year. But, if the final regulations are delayed any longer, schools will not be able to use them until the 1998–99 school year.

Yogurt.—USDA issued a proposed rule, on July 5, 1996, that would allow schools to serve yogurt as a credited food item in the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Yogurt will help us provide students with more options to choose from and will be particularly popular with some high school students. The proposed yogurt rule has the support of most, if not all, relevant public interest organizations. Approximately 1,400 comments were filed in favor of the Proposed Rule and only 50 comments opposed it. Nonetheless, the yogurt regulation has not yet been finalized. Anything this committee can do to move the department forward would be much appreciated.

Reauthorization.—The 105th Congress is charged with reauthorizing those child nutrition programs that expire on September 30, 1998. These programs include: The Summer Food Service Program; The Commodity Distribution Program; The Nutrition Education and Training Program; State Administrative Expenses; Homeless Preschool Children's Program; The Child and Adult Care Food Program Demonstration Project; The Food Service Management Institute; and WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants and Children. ASFSA supports the reauthorization of these programs.

We appreciate that dollars are scarce—to say the least. Hopefully, however, we can continue to move forward on making these programs easier to administer and reduce the amount of paperwork. Child nutrition programs continue to be very difficult to administer and are very time consuming. Each year, we send free and reduced-price applications home to everyone enrolled in participating schools, approximately 45-million children. Approximately, 15-million applications for free or reduced-price meals are received from parents, each of which must be processed. Each day we must count and identify each student at the point of service to determine the eligibility category for that particular child.

Mr. Chairman, each member of our association takes his or her responsibility quite seriously. We want to follow the rules and administer the Programs in a manner consistent with the statutes and the regulations. However, we are concerned that we are losing sight of our larger goal, which is to feed children. There are children who take food home each day to feed younger siblings. There are children who secretly take food home on Friday, because they do not have any other food to eat over the weekend; and, after decades of improving child nutrition through increasing participation in the National School Lunch Program, student participation has been relatively flat over the past decade, and some schools have dropped out of the Program altogether.

Therefore, we would like to explore with you several concepts as we move reauthorization:

- We must, of course, be accountable. But the current audit/error-rate system seems excessive. If a school makes an error on just one application and provides a free meal to a child who only qualifies for a reduced-price meal, that school fails its review. Frequently, the audit process seems excessive given the amount of money that is reclaimed or at risk. There should be some type of cost/benefit analysis applied to the error rate system. We would appreciate exploring with the committee how to establish an error-rate tolerance system that is consistent with the nature of the Program.
- We would like to explore with the committee whether it is possible to reduce our three-tier system—free, reduced-price, and paid—to a two-tier system. There are many children of the "working poor" who cannot afford the $0.40 for a reduced-priced lunch. As a result, our lowest participation is within the reduced-price category. If welfare reform does result in moving unemployed parents into jobs, their children will be moving from the free category to the reduced-price. If, as our experience tells us, they also are not able to afford the $0.40 for lunch each day, their academic performance, cognitive growth, and physical health will suffer.
- We would like to make it easier for schools to use provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act [42 U.S.C. 11(a)(1)(C)]. Provision 2 decreases the paperwork

in the Program by allowing schools to collect student income information only once every 3–5 years.

We would like to delete the provision in the National School Lunch Act requiring schools to offer students the same milk varieties as they did the prior year, even if there was not significant demand for those varieties [42 U.S.C. 9(a)(2)(B)].

In closing, Mr. Chairman, it is our hope that ASFSA will work closely over the next year with this committee and its excellent staff, as well as with the House and USDA, to help craft a child nutrition reauthorization act of 1998 that will make these programs easier and less expensive to administer.

Again, Mr. Chairman, we'd like to thank you and every member of this committee for your dedication to child nutrition. We believe these programs are an our future and a wise use of Federal funds. Thank you very much. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

SENATORS' QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE WITNESSES AND RESPONSES THEREOF

Children's Nutrition Research Center

[GENERAL QUESTIONS]

Question 1. How would you measure the success of the National School Lunch Program?

Response. The goal of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is healthful diets for the Nation's school children. When the NSLP was established, American children were subject to a variety of nutritional deficiency diseases which are rarely seen today. Except for the increasing incidence of childhood obesity and the decreasing level of physical activity, America's children are healthier today than they were at the start of the NSLP. The steadily increasing heights of American children are ample evidence of this improvement since accelerated growth is one of the most sensitive gauges of nutritional adequacy and, conversely, growth failure is a uniform finding-in malnourished children. While it is not possible to *precisely* quantify the specific contribution of the NSLP either to the improved nutritional health of American children or to the diminished occurrence of nutrient deficiency diseases, the NSLP is *unequivocally one of the principal contributing factors*. On average, NSLP supplies approximately one-third of the calories and nutrient intakes of children who participate in the program. Therefore, for children at risk whose nutrient intakes at home are less than desirable, the NSLP would provide more than one-third of their nutritional needs, Using this yardstick, the NSLP is a *very significant* contributor to the nutritional health of American children and, therefore, a *very successful* program indeed.

The NSLP (and the School Breakfast Program) has achieved this goal using two simultaneous strategies. First, the NSLP provides nutritious meal to students so that healthful choices are available to them. Second, the NSLP contributes to the nutrition education of the Nation's children, Since nutrition habits are established during childhood, the school cafeteria is a critical arena for forming good choices for a lifetime of healthy eating. Children are able to use the knowledge and motivation provided by the NSLP both when selecting foods as part of the NSLP, and also when eating away from school, Using these strategies, the NSLP improves the nutritional status of school children which contributes directly both to their health and to their education.

Consequently, important measures of the success of the NSLP would include: (a) documentation of access to the program, a high level of participation by eligible children, and evidence of food consumption in school, (b) satisfaction of accepted standards of food safety, (c) nutrient assessment of the healthfulness of meals served in the program, (d) objective physical and biochemical signs of nutritional adequacy in school children, (e) confirmation of the benefits of school meals both to improved learning and to diminution of the psychosocial consequences of food insecurity (f) extent of nutrition knowledge among students, and (g) attitudes of students toward healthy eating practices.

Progress on these measures will guarantee the, successful final outcome of the Program, the healthfulness of children's diets and the subsequent health of the Nation's next generation of adults.

Question 2. From each of your perspectives outside of the School Meals Programs, are the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs meeting the needs of today's children? Are they poised to meet the various needs of children in the future?

Response. On the whole, the NSLP is meeting the needs of today's children. By the sheer numbers of children served daily, and for the reasons outlined above, the NSLP is having a very positive impact on the nutritional needs of our children. The School Breakfast Program must be considered a success in this regard as well, although there are fewer participants and, therefore, fewer children who obtain a nutritional advantage.

The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment, published by the USDA in October 19937 collected national representative data on nutrients and foods provided in school meals. This assessment also provided a description of the dietary intakes of the Nation's children on a typical schoolday. The data indicated that school lunches generally provided one-third or more of the *Recommended Dietary Allowances* for calories and most key nutrients. Nonetheless, while school lunches met the Dietary Guidelines for the intake of many nutrients, including cholesterol, they did not meet them for consumed total fat or saturated fat. Thus, school lunches provided 38 percent of calories as fat and 15 percent as saturated fats while the Dietary Guidelines goals are 30 percent and 10 percent, respectively. School breakfasts provided one-fourth or more of the *Recommended Dietary Allowances* for most nutrients and did, in fact, meet the Dietary Guidelines recommendations for total fat intake, but did not meet the intake goal for saturated fat.

The USDA responded to these findings with the *School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children* which updated the nutrition standards for school meals in order to be consistent with *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Schools are required to meet these standards by no later than the 1998/99 schoolyear. To help ensure this commendable goal, the USDA began an aggressive effort to support the School Meals Initiative. This effort focuses on (a) expanded technical assistance and training of school food service personnel, and (b) innovative nutrition education enterprises to enable children to make the proper food choices for a healthy diet.

As we look to the future, it is critical to reexamine guidelines and implementation practices on a systematic basis to ensure continued consistency with new scientific findings, and with changes in population demographics, family structure, and the educational system. Thus, as the racial/ethic-mix of American children changes, we must be aware of possible genetic effects on nutritional requirements as well as cultural determinants of food habits and choices. A particularly important challenge is to integrate our dietary efforts with an enhanced emphasis on the promotion of physical activity as an essential component of a healthy lifestyle. Emphasis on dietary change alone will not correct the contribution of lack of physical activity to the increasing development of obesity in our children. Finally, in order to remain ready to meet the nutritional needs of children, one must continue to support the basic and applied research in children's nutrition necessary to reach informed consensus for programmatic policy decisions in the future.

Question 3. How have advances in nutrition and food manufacturing and production (*i.e.*, bioengineering for increased nutritional value) changed the School Lunch Program? How could future advances affect the School Meals Program?

Response. Advances in nutrition continue confirm the direct links between proper diet and good health. Balance, variety and moderation in dietary intake habits have been repeatedly affirmed by all nutritional research into the connections between diet and health. Similarly, there is consensus on the detrimental consequences of the poor nutritional habits contributing to approximately half of the leading causes of death in the United States. Nutrition research data have allowed us to all but eliminate dietary deficiency diseases and to optimize the amount and kinds of nutrients available to Americans. Current research in nutrition has led us farther forward by (a) more clearly defining the appropriate nutrition requirements for specific nutrients, for specific age groups, and for specific medical conditions requiring nutritional intervention or support, (b) determining the genes responsible for distinct nutritional problems, thus allowing nutritional recommendations to be tailored appropriately to at-risk individuals rather than to the population as a whole, and (c) identifying the basic mechanisms of disorders which are the consequence of aberrant nutrition, thus providing avenues to more effective treatment choices which are based firmly in science.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans is a concise, practical summary of much of the above information. These Guidelines are based on the preponderance of available scientific information at this time. The "School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children" was developed precisely because of a need to update nutrition standards for the School Meals Programs in order to reflect modem scientific knowledge about

the relationships between diet and health. In particular, it was important for school meals to come into compliance with the recommendations of *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* which were concerned with the levels of fat and saturated fats in the diets of Americans. The Initiative resulted in a major change to the School Meals Program, setting nutritional standards while allowing variety in menu planning options. Menu planners have been given new guidance, new resource materials, and new flexibility to achieve the nutritional goals of *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Thus, for example, the recent approval of yogurt as a meat alternative expands the repertoire of foods which facilitate achieving adequate protein and calcium intake while lowering fat intake. Similar considerations exist for the substitution of skim and low fat milks for whole milk. Some would choose to interpret these substitutions as indicating that yogurt is better than meat, that skim milk is better than whole milk, or that the "nutrition police" are out to eliminate meat products from the diets of children. These superficial "good food/bad food" extrapolations are far from the tenets of nutrition science, and far from mainstream nutrition practice which aims to achieve healthy dietary intake goals by offering *the enjoyment of a wide variety of foods*.

Another important change in the School Lunch Program is the increased emphasis on the essential role of the nutrition education component, The Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) and Team Nutrition provide educational materials to be used in the lunchroom, classroom, and community. This is based on the understanding that just providing healthy meals is only half the job, since children should be taught to make healthy food choices to carry the benefits of the National School Lunch Program with them throughout life. One of the driving forces in maintaining nutritional habits is enjoyment and, as stated immediately above, variety in available foods is one of the principal means of enhancing enjoyment. Nonetheless, in a society where food is abundant, it is equally clear that the regulation of food intake and the mechanisms that control satiety in school aged children must be more fully understood in order to both enhance the consumption of healthful foods and to prevent the overconsumption of calories leading to obesity. For this reason, enhanced research efforts in the behavioral control of food preferences and consumption, and the role of educational programs in modifying these behaviors is essential. Given the expanded racial and ethnic composition of America's school children, data from such research are increasingly more important.

Dynamic advances have been made in food manufacturing and production. "Traditional" agricultural and food sciences have been responsible for both the vast quantities and the diverse qualities of the foods now available to America's children. Progress in the overall health of our Nation's children *would not have been possible* percentable without these advances. Now, a wider variety of "value added" products are making an appearance. "Adding value" encourages the use of a wider variety of foods or ingredients because the partial processing of ingredients decreases preparation and cooking time. While some individuals bemoan the appearance of such products as somehow violating an historical pact between the earth, the farmer, and the consumer, there is no doubt that mankind has been altering foods for human consumption since the beginning of agriculture, approximately 10 millennia ago. The selective breeding of domesticated animals and the widespread use of fermentation for fun (beer, wine) and variety (soy) are obvious examples. There is not a single food one can buy in today's supermarkets, even those which are touted as "natural" which has not been modified by man over the course of history. Today's value added products are merely an extension of man's historical success in tailoring available foods to his/her intake preferences. In today's society where two wage-earner families are the rule rather than the exception, value added convenience foods are an important adjunct to encouraging variety in dietary intake. Nonetheless, all nutritionist scientists and educators, the USDA, HHS, and *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* maintain a continued commitment to the principle that all diets (therefore school meals) should be comprised primarily of a variety of conventional foods that provide adequate amounts of naturally occurring ingredients rather than rely on formulated foods which have been artificially fortified.

Advances in food technology have now also extended to so-called food "biotechnology" or "bioengineering." As noted above, man has been altering foods since prehistory. Since traditional farm breeding practices and botanical hybridizations also involve the movement of genes between living animals or plants, they are also, by definition, forms of "*bio*technology" or "*bio*engineering." Today's new, gene-based approaches extend the evolution of this process either by enhancing standard practices of hybridization of natural food products or by the selected introduction of new genes using methods hitherto unavailable, in either instance, a new variety product is achieved. If this new product does not have some higher quality advantages compared with the old product, it has limited commercial viability. To date, the commer-

cial advantages, of most of the new biotech products relate to their agronomic properties-pest resistance, delayed ripening, etc. While these do not directly translate to a new nutritional advantage per se in the National School Lunch Program, they do result in the more efficient production of more salable food and, thus, in more food available to the NSLP at a more economical price.

The major "payoff" in food biotechnology will come in the targeted improvement of individual foods to meet specific nutritional requirements. Thus, for example, healthful components such as antioxidants might be added to foods traditionally low in these compounds. In the research greenhouse at the Children's Nutrition Research Center, for example, plant scientists are studying the mechanisms by which plants store minerals such as calcium and iron. The goal is to provide the scientific basis for enhancing the available amounts of these essential nutrients in plants. Iron deficiency anemia and poor calcium intake are significant problems even in this country, and these inadequacies are critical in many parts of the world where meat and dairy products are not a regular part of the diet.

[*The following questions were specifically presented to Dr. Bier:*]

Question 1. You have articulated the nutritional problems of school-aged children. Can you expand on the effect the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs have had on children's health?

Response. To a large extent, my response to general question number 1 above addresses this question as well. The school cafeteria is second only to the home in developing and fostering healthy food habits. The NSLP has been a key infrastructural component of national food policy and of the programs that have been responsible for the successful, near elimination of nutrient deficiency diseases in American children. The accompanying table[1]—*Intakes from NSLP and SBP Meals as a Percentage of Total 24-hour Intakes by Family Income—is based on data from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study*. This study showed that, overall, participants in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program derived 35 percent of their daily food energy (calories) from school, meals. Students from families with income levels below the poverty level receive 38 percent of calories from school meals while this fraction drops to 32 percent in children who come from families whose income level is greater than 195 percent of the poverty level. Percentages of other essential dietary nutrient components derived from school meals follow the same pattern across income groups. Percentages are highest for the low-income group and lower for the higher-income groups.

Having a healthy future adult population requires having healthy children today. Food availability, food variety, and food security contribute immeasurably to the physical and psychosocial health of America's children.

(a) A hungry child is potentially a malnourished child who may now or later require health care services for the acute or chronic complications of the malnutrition The Childhood Hunger Identification Project found that children from hungry households were 2.5 times more likely to suffer health problems.

(b) A hungry child is not a learning child. Even moderate undernutrition ran have lasting effects on the cognitive development of children. Professor Pollitt of the Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University School of Nutrition (as well as many other specialists in the relationships between nutrition and child development), has reported that inadequate nutrition Is a significant cause of impaired cognitive development and is associated with increased educational failure. An inadequately nourished child cannot learn. Children that cannot learn, cannot subsequently earn. If they cannot earn, they cannot become personally responsible or self-sufficient, The consequences of inadequate primary school education are evident every day in adult society, including numerous job assistance and training programs, and the like.

(c) A hungry child is a threatened, insecure child, one who is less likely to be an enthusiastic believer and optimistic participant in the positive social mores of society. Carried to extreme, a truly hungry child may have to resort to stealing food and/or the money to buy food, with long-term detrimental social and legal consequences.

Taking health in its most general definition, then, the NSLP has surely had a very positive effect on the overall health of America's children by providing them an adequate, healthful source of food.

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[1] Dr. Bier's attachment is retained in Committee files

Question 2. What scientific evidence do we have regarding the difference in nutrient consumption between the poor and nonpoor children? From the nutrition standpoint, should the School Lunch Program concentrate more on participation by poor children or all children?

Response. As discussed in the answer above and shown in the table cited in that response, poor children receive a higher fraction of their total energy and essential nutrient intakes in the NSLP than do nonpoor children. The following table, "Nutrient Intakes as Percentages of 1989 Recommended Energy Allowances and Recommended Dietary Allowances", is based on a *1989–91 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes for Individuals* study, and shows data on nutrient intakes as a percentage of the Recommended Dietary Allowances stratified by poverty status. The picture that emerges is that poverty status has little influence on children's energy (calorie) intake. For lower-income children, energy intakes are below 100 percent of recommended allowances (similar to American children as a whole) but the average consumption levels for other nutrients are, on average, well above 100 percent of the corresponding recommended allowances. To interpret these data, it is important to remember that *Recommended Dietary Allowances* (RDA) are set at a level high enough above the minimum requirement level to ensure that *essentially all people* will be receiving an adequate intake level. Therefore, an intake above the RDA is a virtual guarantee of nutrient sufficiency. On the other hand, most people will still be healthy even if they are consuming intakes somewhat below the RDA since these intakes will be above their actual, true requirement level. A level of food energy intake below the RDA (as shown in the table) is not unusual since most adults tend to under-report the number of calories they actually consume. In any case, even allowing for the vagaries of reporting, the intakes are not different among income levels.

According to the authorizing legislation, the National School Lunch Act, the Department of Agriculture is charged with the mission of safeguarding the health and well-being of the Nation's children. The intent is not limited to poor children. Moreover, although I am clearly not an expert in these areas, I understand that it would be difficult to conduct the NSLP without full-student participation. In part, this appears to reflect both local school logistical problems as well as issues associated with vendors and other extramural parties. Moreover, it would be very difficult to concentrate on the needs of just low-income children given that poverty is not limited to certain geographic areas. According to the 1990 Census, almost 60 percent of low-income children live in areas where less than 50 percent of the households are below 185-percent poverty level. In other words, the children who would be most eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals live in areas where most households are too affluent to receive benefits. Additionally, differentiating benefits at the point of service would be especially burdensome to schools since they would essentially have to have a different menu for low-income children. Not only would this make it difficult to establish and monitor a program, *it would overtly identify and potentially stigmatize low-income children*.

The above analysis is based on average data and does not recognize the truly special case, *i.e.*, particularly poor, disadvantaged, or medically impaired children whose diets may require individual assistance. These children must be identified and helped. Nonetheless, this help could be delivered in specialized, targeted programs to the limited number of individual who need them. This approach does not require a complete restructuring of the otherwise highly successful NSLP.

Question 3. What can be done to address the poor nutritional habits of many teenagers?

Response. Continued research aimed at understanding the eating behaviors of teenagers is essential for future policy planning, as is continued monitoring and assessment of the effects of intervention measures as they are applied.

Current scientific knowledge tells us that there is no simple, one solution fits all to this question which has many levels of complexity. The first, obvious impediment to a simple solution is the fact that the nutritional problems of adolescent boys and adolescent girls are different.

Adolescent boys, because they consume very large quantities of food during their pubertal growth spurt, do not generally have nutritional deficiencies and, in fact, usually consume more than the *Recommended Daily Allowances* of essential nutrients. Thus, the nutritional problems of adolescent boys tend to be those of nutritional excess, including overconsumption of calories, total fat, saturated fat, and salt. No doubt, adolescent boys do not have an adequate intake of fruits and vegetables but, by the sheer volume of consumption of other foods, vitamin and mineral needs are usually met. Nonetheless, increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is a highly desirable goal because these foods contain a variety of other health pro-

moting and disease preventing compounds. Overall, then, nutritional goals in teenage boys are directed to (a) balancing food intake with the needs of growth and physical activity in order to prevent the development of obesity, (b) decreasing the intakes of total fat, saturated fat, and salt, and (c) increasing fruit and vegetable intake.

Adolescent girls, on the other hand, suffer specific nutrient deficiency problems that require constant vigilance. Principally, these deficiencies appear to result from the adolescent girl's desire to maintain a body image more appropriate for the dictates of popular fashion magazines than for her own habits and physiological needs. Thus, adolescent girls tend to underconsume calories and, consequently, underconsume essential nutrients, particularly calcium and iron. The latter elements are particularly important for the health of adolescent girls. Iron needs naturally increase in teenage girls once they start to menstruate. Good iron status is not only essential for health, well being, physical performance, and the prevention of anemia, there is ample evidence that inadequate iron status impairs intellectual performance even before anemia is apparent. Adequate calcium intake is especially important in teenage girls since all evidence points to the fact that women accrue essentially all their bone calcium before their early to mid-twenties. Thereafter, a woman's bone mineral density declines inexorably as she ages. This decline is accelerated after menopause and is a major factor in the development of osteoporosis, a crippling disease of elderly women which results in confinement, incapacitation, and diminished quality of life, and whose costs to the health care system amount to hundreds of millions of dollars, at least.

Thus, ensuring adequate calcium intake in adolescent girls is a national health priority since intake data confirm that adolescent girls consume significantly less than *The Recommended Dietary Allowance* published by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences, and consume far less than the even higher calcium intake level recommended by a panel of experts at a recent National Institutes of Health Consensus Conference on the issue. Moreover, scientists at the Children's Nutrition Research Center (*using table*, nonradioactive calcium isotope techniques developed at the Center) have shown, in fact, that accelerated bone calcium accretion begins in girls a year or 2 before the obvious onset of puberty. These data make clear that *Recommended Dietary Allowances* for calcium intake in girls must be increased in the late prepubertal years as well.

Good nutrition education is surely the best single, general approach to an answer. Teenagers have a significant amount of freedom in selecting foods. Their food choices should be guided by a scientifically sound understanding of the relationships between food and health, including the role of physical activity. To make education most effective, must be started early, it must be fun, it must be, interactive, and it must be made relevant to them, their habits, and their lifestyles.

Rapid physical growth in the early teenage years makes good nutritional habits vital to achieving optimal growth. Nutrition education during adolescence is essential in providing the motivation, skills, and knowledge base necessary for making informed food choices. In addition to the many nutrition education efforts directed to adolescents through the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) and comprehensive school health, the USDA will make available a skills-based nutrition education training program for teenagers through a Team Nutrition Middle Schools initiative that is currently under development.

Judith L. Dodd[2]

[GENERAL QUESTIONS]

Question 1. How would you measure success of the National School Lunch Program?

Response. As noted in my testimony, success can be measured by the findings of studies that indicate that children who participate in meals at school are more likely to reach nutrition goals for key nutrients than those who do not participate. Research connected with the companion program, school breakfast, indicates that children who consume breakfast are more likely to reach their learning potential. Learning success is a measure of meals at school. In an era where statistics support that children are coming to school hungry and are depending on meals as part of their basic subsistence, participation in meals is another measure. The growth of

[2] Ms. Dodd submitted responses to the following general questions.

the Breakfast Program is a recent success. School lunch was initiated in part because of the poor nutritional health of our young people. We are not seeing high levels of nutrition deficiencies among school aged children. It is apparent school meals are filling a need.

If this question is intended to determine how we might measure future success, based on current trends I would suggest success might be indicated by monitoring:

- Participation in meals that meet current dietary guidance.
- Changes in nutrition status of population groups that participate in school meals as compared with those who choose not to participate.
- Changes in attitudes of teachers, parents, and school administrators as to the value of school meals as a contributor to a child's ability to learn and in their support for this program (adequate time, integration with curriculum, encouragement for child participation).
- Choices of children in regard to selecting nutritious meals.

Question 2. From each of your perspectives outside of the School Meals Programs, are the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs meeting the needs of today's children? Are they poised to meet the various needs of children in the future?

Response. As I see it, school meals have the potential to fulfill these needs of children:

- Nutrition and energy to support activity, learning, growth and development.
- Sociability and a stress outlet that a break for food can provide in a day devoted to study.
- Education and practice in healthy eating and trying new foods.

I believe there are school food service programs that fulfill these needs to the best of their ability within what is often an unsupportive or even hostile school environment. The following points need to be given priority:

- Currently there are programs that are structured to allow children to meet their nutrient needs including calories and that offer food that models healthy eating. This needs to be the standard for reimbursement.
- A nutrition education component is imperative to give children the background to expand their food choices to include more nutritious alternatives.

Current statistics indicate an increase in the weight of our children (NHANES III) and evidence that-eating disorders and dieting are becoming more apparent at younger ages. At the same time there appears to be a decrease in time for meaningful exercise and an increase in more time in sedentary activities. It is time to look at meals in light of nutrient content with reasonable calories balanced by physical education/recess within the schoolday. The current emphasis on meeting dietary guidelines may be leading us to a unhealthy attitude about balance. The end result is often reducing fat and replacing the calories with foods that offer low nutrient density. The concept of total calories needs to be evaluated in light of nutrition and activity needs.

Question 3. How have advances in nutrition and food manufacturing and production (*i.e.*, bioengineering for increased nutritional value) changed the School Lunch Program? How could future advances affect the School Meals Programs?

Response. Fortification, enrichment and other technologies are important to our food supply. We are fortunate to have a wide range of flavorful alternative food products that fit the needs of today's children and the Meals Programs. Adding key nutrients to popular foods has proven to be an advantage. However, in some cases I do not see such foods as being the best choices for meals at school. Since I believe a part of serving meals at school is providing a model for healthy eating and practice for expanding food choices, use of some of the "increased nutrition value" foods reinforce negative values. For example:

- Adding vitamins and minerals to colored water with sweetener and a low percent of fruit juices doesn't make that drink the equal of 100-percent juice even when the paper and pencil nutrient value is higher! We know fruits and vegetables carry nutrients that go beyond the usually noted vitamins and minerals. In some cases the benefits have yet to be determined and the components named. These are not going to be found in the fortified drink.

- Fortifying a donut with vitamins and minerals certainly adds nutrition value to the product but leaves the child with the concept that any food that looks similar is equally nutritious. The idea of carrying the learning from meals at school to meals away from school is lost. There is nothing wrong with using a donut as part of a school breakfast . . . occasionally. However, it should be presented as what is is, a higher fat alternative to some other choices. Adding the extra nutrients does not change these facts and the extra nutrients don't replace the need for a fruit or juice and milk at the meal to add a range of many nutrients.
- Similarly, a name brand sandwich or pizza made expressly to meet the protein, fat and sodium requirements of a reimbursed meal, appears to a child to be equal to the same foods sold away from the school. Where is the learning and what are we promoting?

My concern would be that we are moving to the point where foods engineered to meet nutrient guidelines will be the center point of a meal removing the need to provide healthful variety.

[*The following questions were specifically presented to Ms. Dodd:*]

Question 1. As you pointed out in your testimony, today's children face many different problems such as eating disorders, obesity, adequate nutrient intake. Do you think that the current School Lunch Program is designed to meet the individual needs of different children? From the nutrition standpoint, should the School Lunch Program concentrate more on participation by poor children or all children?

Response. Yes, I believe the current Program can meet individual needs. Doing this takes creativity and a team approach. The key is a qualified school food service director who is able to work with parents, teachers, school nurses and those children with special needs. Like adults, one cannot expect children to gravitate toward healthy eating without education and support. The meal pattern can offer choices that fit the needs of most children. However, for the benefits to be obtained, children must participate. This is where the combination of education and support become critical.

Although children whose families exist on incomes close to or below the poverty level are at the greatest risk, hunger and nutrition related problems exist at all income levels. Ideally, if we believe that providing the nutrient support of healthy meals is a part of a positive learning environment, participation by all children is important. In an era of tight resources, emphasis should be on children at risk. Income is not the only factor that puts a child at risk.

Question 2. School food authorities face many difficulties in operating the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs such as insufficient time for children to eat. Many of the decisions that affect the School Meals Programs are not made by the school food authorities. Can you elaborate on what policy changes would be necessary to address these difficulties?

Response. Although I am not an authority on policy changes, I will address the issues:

— At least 30 minutes should be scheduled for a lunch, allowing in this time, an opportunity to get to the cafeteria; possibly stop at the restroom; move through the cafeteria line; and sit to eat! Depending on the flow of the arrival of children, breakfast can be a shorter time, but no less then 15 minutes for actually sitting and eating.

Scheduling appears to be a major conflict in many schools. Teacher contracts, bus and transportation requirements, classroom size and limited space appear to be major barriers to allowing adequate time for meals. Administration sets these policies.

— In some cases time for breakfast is from when the child can enter the building (dependent on someone opening the building) to the time the bell rings. This can be as little as 5 minutes when a bus is late. Lunch schedules may have to start as early as 10:30 to allow for all of the groups of children to eat lunch.

— Time for lunch can be as low as 20 minutes. Since the child has to move to the cafeteria and get in a line,5 or more minutes is lost getting there and getting out.

— Mealtime is often the only time when students can congregate, play outdoors, and socialize. This canlead to hurrying through a meal to have the opportunity for a quick game outside.

— Cafeterias need to be staffed and set-up to make it easy for a child to meet the required time schedule. This may require added staffing, parent volunteers or assigned school personnel to help younger children, direct traffic flow, and maintain some order in lines.

— Competition for the student's attention should be limited at mealtime. This requires support of administration and cafeteria monitors.

— Current competitive food regulations need to be enforced clubs or school shops should not be allowed to sell candy, soda, chips, cookies.

— Young children should be encouraged to take the time to eat rather than to be tempted to eat quickly ordiscard food to move outside to play.

Question 3. Please elaborate on the role of the private sector in the School Meals Program. What effect will this role have on the School Meals Program?

Response. One role of the private sector is sales and delivery of branded food as a component of school meals. Several popular pizza or burger chains deliver product to be sold in the school cafeteria. One must wonder why there needs to be a school cafeteria, a staff, a program . . . if menu needs can be met by delivering food in this way! Could the effect be food courts operated by fast food chains? Is this the best use of tax dollars to support nutritious meals for children? In light of concerns already raised in my testimony on meeting dietary guidelines and providing children with nutrition education, the effect of this practice seems to be in opposition to a strong, nutrition based school meals program that offers variety.

Another role of the private sector is to enhance the potential for education by providing support materials. Educational materials for the classroom or cafeteria, training materials to use with staff or parents, incentives such as stickers or prizes to encourage participation are examples of involvement of the private sector. These can have a positive effect and help expand the reach of school food service and nutrition education. However, it is crucial that the educational value and the quality of the materials are evaluated and the direct product endorsement is minimized.

Question 4. What can be done to address the poor nutritional habits of many teenagers?

Response. Unfortunately, studies indicate the best approach is to bring them into adolescence with a strong nutrition base. Emphasizing nutrition education in the early schoolyears is more effective than trying to change poor habits during the teen years. However, teens are concerned about appearance and enhancing their skills. Some positive approaches might be:

- *Work* more closely with those interested in athletics, dance and competition providing them with valid nutrition information, a training table in the cafeteria, healthy snacks at practices and when teams travel.
- *Involve* teens on taste panels, advisory boards. Teen leaders may have more influence with other students.
- *Provide* some choices they ask for within the scope of what is possible in the school cafeteria. Salad bars, yogurt, grab-and-go breakfast or lunch meals (sandwich wraps).
- *Enhance* curriculum to give a positive message at all grade levels. Health, Family and Consumer Science classes, Physical Education are natural choices but so are many science, language and math classes. This may require changing some adult attitudes about the importance of nutrition to teens, appropriate calorie needs, and safe dieting and exercise patterns. Use some positive teen spokespersons or support groups to provide a good nutrition message. Unfortunately, teen models, actors and athletes may not be the right image!

Question 5. How can we improve school meal participation in situations where the children have access to outside food vendors at lunch time?

Response.

If school meals are going to compete with outside vendors, they must market on a similar scale or at least with the same *gusto* as the competition. This means there must be a combination of:

Product.—A good tasting, attractive array of choices that have child appeal. Nutrition should be an advantage. With education, even young children can recognize and look for healthy eating.

Price.—Although children may not recognize a bargain school meals are one, and putting the price against the competition and comparing it with the nutrition value may make the point. This should also be sent home to parents and adults to get their support on the price advantage of meals at school.

Placement.—Capitalize on the convenience of food in the building but make the delivery system quick, the environment attractive (colorful, music, social).

Promotion.—We need to have incentives that at least attract those looking for games, prizes, stickers, a souvenir cup occasionally. Posters, signs, announcements on the "PA", jingles, and a menu that sells the products . . . ! Theme meals, decorations add to the excitement.

[*A smiling staff is another incentive and a reason to enjoy lunch in the school too!*]

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions.

LETTER

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NORRIS MIDDLE SCHOOL,
2235 South 46 Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68106–3399,
February 27, 1997.

Senator RICHARD LUGAR, CHAIRMAN,
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry,
Washington, DC.

TO THE HONORABLE SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR: As the principal of the largest middle school in the greater Omaha area, I work with approximately 1,000 students with varying needs and from diverse backgrounds. My role as principal allows me to see firsthand the tremendous benefits of the universal breakfast program. Providing free breakfasts to all students has a major positive impact on the quality of education for our students.

Some of the benefits of our universal breakfast program are:

— Increased self-esteem for students who previously had been identified as participating in the Free and Reduced Breakfast Program.

— Decreased administrative and clerical paper work that had been required in the free/reduced breakfast program.

— Increased student academic performance. Students from some home are provided their most nutritional meals of the day at school.

— Increased numbers of students receiving nutritional meals. Previously many needy youngsters opted out of the Free/Reduced Breakfast Program because of social embarrassment.

A universal lunch program, I believe, is a necessity. This program would obviously have the same benefits as the Breakfast Program. Nothing is sadder than a hungry child; one who forgets lunch money, or one that is too embarrassed because of status. Our lunch procedure is designed to maintain lunch status confidentiality, however, the stigma is ever present.

For these reasons, I heartily support and endorse the universal free breakfast program and hope it would expand to universal lunch program. It provides students a dignified means to receiving nutritional meals that results in increased student success.

Sincerely,

(Signed) JANELLE K. MULLEN,
Principal.

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